The Multi-Faceted Uses of Photography in Education

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INTRODUCTION

Artists provide us a glimpse into their world with every work they render, and photographic art adds to the clarity in which specific segments of our world are captured and frozen in time. Photography allows viewers to gaze into other environments, cultures, and situations and look through another's eyes. This change in perspective broadens our horizons and permits us to envision life from a different paradigm. One of my goals in teaching this unit is to give students from varied backgrounds a glimpse into their classmates' lives.

There is a huge difference between presentation and learning, and what I say and do in the classroom may last an entire lifetime for some students. In order for a perception to become a paradigm, I must constantly repeat the same thing throughout the semester for the words to become reality. I must also be certain that all I present is accurate, and that involves reviewing my lesson plans prior to presentation and questioning any unsubstantiated portions of my lesson.

I am always amazed at how little students see in their surroundings and how much they take for granted in their lives. They seldom take the time to actually look at their environment and appreciate the beauty and complexity around them. They consider themselves just like everyone else and are unaware of the importance of their traditions and unique cultural influences. Photography is a visual insight into their lives and their importance in our community.

Our small midtown middle school sets high standards for administrators, teachers, and students. We are a part of an enormous school district in a huge cosmopolitan area. Our students live in every part of the city and travel to and from school by bus. No one is zoned to our school, and each student must meet specific requirements to attend our school. Our students find solace in our school because they are no longer ridiculed or considered different because they are smart. Actually, we celebrate our differences. Many students are intelligent, first-generation Americans whose parents moved to America to provide a better life for themselves and their families. They cling to their homeland traditions and mores, carefully manage their children's lives, and question American ways. We are a Title One school that has a vast array of socio-economic and cultural groups represented. Our students speak beautiful English, but in a recent survey of our three hundred middle school students we learned that English is a second language in many homes. In our students' homes forty-seven other languages are spoken as their primary language. I was not even familiar with two of the languages. This diversity is a valuable asset. In learning about families, their traditions, and their culture we create an atmosphere of understanding and eliminate fear of the unknown, the breeding ground of misunderstanding and hatred.

An old cliché says, "A picture is worth a thousand words." In today's click and view society this is especially true, but not all the photographic images available to us are worthy of our attention. Photography is a fairly recent addition as an art medium. Gifted artisans worked at their craft to elevate the status of photography to an art form, and yet today photography is taken for granted. Everyone thinks they are a photographer, but most are humbled after viewing the images of master photographers like Arthur Rothstein, Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, or Diane

Arbus. The educated novice begins to understand the intricacy of the masterful images of these photographers. Their use of light, composition, and mystery to engage the viewer and elicit a reaction is powerful. My purpose in using photography in my classes is more practical than grandiose. I want to integrate photography into my class curricula. Multilevel classes challenge me and other teachers, and lesson plans are designed to be open-ended. The plans show diversity while addressing the special needs of individual students. My goals and lesson plans vary dependent on the class; however, each lesson must provide an avenue where each student can find success and self-satisfaction. Peggy Albers, in "Literacy in the Arts," believes, "If we want children to represent meaning visually, musically, and/or dramatically, along with their written texts—in other words, to create a semiotic system—we have a responsibility to teach them how to create meaning in many sign systems" (26). Albers' work provides useful theoretical background supporting connecting art and writing in the classroom.

An article by Rick Poynor entitled "Picture Imperfect" appears in the July-August issue of *Utne* magazine (36). The article examines a website named "Look at Me." The website deals only with found photographs. Anyone can post photos on the website (www.moderna.org/lookatme), but each photo must meet specific specifications. Each image must be a personal photo taken by an amateur photographer at least twenty-five years ago. These images must not come from studio photos or personal photo albums, but must be photos found at garage sales, flea markets, attics, retrospective shops, or similar locations. The purpose of using photos in this manner is to create mystery and encourage dialogue. Just as in our own photo albums with older photos included, these found photos create intrigue and fill our minds with questions. Out of context the images of everyday people and situations boost our curiosity about the subject, their environment, and the importance of capturing this moment for time immortal. In a group discussion there will be many ideas about the importance of the subject matter and create interest in ordinary scenes.

The German artist, Joachim Schmid, began this idea of collecting photographs over two decades ago, and continues to collect these genre photographs. Many of these images began in his art project named "Pictures from the Street" project (Poynor 36). Others have followed his lead, and have collected simplistic photos that capture a moment in time.

Students seeing photographs taken by everyday people allow them to understand that their photos are important, too. Regular individuals do also create artistic, interesting images. Photographic studios are not the only venues that create aesthetically pleasing images that are of importance and interest to a wide variety of people. Manipulated photographs began soon after the medium began, and digital photography enables computer literate people to further change the reality of a pure photographic image by changing the subject matter or setting.

A major purpose in each of the included units is to demonstrate the significance of capturing a moment in time. Once a photo is taken that person, place and/or activity is frozen in time and has relevance to a select group of viewers, and makes them important. Like the older photos found at the "Look at Me" website, these recent images eventually fade in clarity to viewers who are strangers to the importance of that moment. Formerly anonymous people are now important. Traditions and events now gain individuality, and a unique insight into a world unknown to others outside a select group of people. The individual amateur photographer understands the significance of their efforts more clearly.

Encouraging students to keep truth in their photographic endeavors raises ethical questions. Some questions include the degrees of acceptable manipulation that clearly change the reality and perspective of the image. When manipulated, does the image remain true to the reality of the photographer's perspective and intent? When does reality become more fantasy than truth? What is the ethical responsibility of the photographer to record an event accurately?

OVERVIEW

I want to introduce the world of photography to the students through an historical and artistic perspective. We will discuss elements of successful photography from various accomplished photographers beginning with some of the front runners of the medium. We will learn the progression of the art from its inception. We will also create an ongoing photographic time line and investigate photography throughout its history. We will show the advancement within a short period of time. The emphasis initially is to show that photography is directly affected by the ability to recognize the advantages within each given environment, and to select a vantage point that best captures the photographers' visions. A photographer also anticipates possible rapidly changing situations and knows the subject prior to taking a photograph. I also want the students to compare and contrast different photographic styles. I especially want them to see the common design elements of successful photographs. Established photographers show great prowess, the capabilities of the available equipment, and indicate a well established understanding of the medium.

These units introduce the important historical photographers from around the world and their varied approaches to the medium. The projects also correlate famous photographs with contemporary photographs by successful amateurs, and their own creations. Designing their own photographic montage enhances their awareness of the beauty in their lives, and the importance of their unique personal qualities in building our diverse student population. It adds importance to the cultural components in our school and our community. The lessons allow each student to gain a better understanding of the beauty around them and the beauty within themselves. This is also a visual method of contemplating the evolving complexity in their emerging lives as they enter their formative years. Several lessons deal with personal facets of their lives and permit them to give others insight into their cultural history and the elements that they consider important. I want them to understand that their fresh face is an important part of our emerging society. It also helps to get the students more personally involved in the learning process. Completely familiar elements of their lives are put into another, more visible realm, creating common bonds among students. I want them to realize that photography goes beyond beauty. The photographer visualizes their photograph and effectively uses given situations.

Second, I want them to learn the vocabulary of the discipline and the proper use of photographic equipment using disposable cameras, 35mm cameras, and digital cameras. I want them to see the difference in photographing the same image using the three different types of cameras. Incorporating computer science into the learning experience enables each student to learn different software, giving them the ability to change the effects of positioning subjects, change the depth of field, and make color correction. These units assist students in their exploration of an ever changing medium. After the various units are completed, I want students to have a better understanding of the complexity involved in taking a successful photograph. I also hope that photography becomes an important part of many students' lives. I especially want the child who never considered himself to be artistic to find satisfaction in his photographic efforts and realize he does have an artistic outlet.

SIXTH GRADE CLASS UNITS

As an art teacher I incorporate the vernacular and impetus of other disciplines to make the artistic experience more relevant to even the artistically-challenged student. Because there are no prerequisites for any of my classes, independent curriculum design is essential. Sixth grade students study the principles and elements of design that include line, shape, color, texture, value, symmetry, balance, and composition. Students learn these elements and principles of design by creating age-appropriate projects developed to teach specific skills and concepts. Projects include grade-level principles that conform with our district's vertical alignment curriculum. We have the

ability to select projects that teach these specific concepts and still maintain our individuality and the needs of our students.

For the sixth grade students a photography unit provides a method for each student to explore the unique dynamics of their family, traditions, and cultural heritage. The purpose is to chronicle the significance and importance of each individual in our school environment. The project is an assemblage using mixed mediums designed to introduce themselves to the student population and celebrate our unique qualities and our diversity. Before embarking on this involved project, we will complete several mini-projects and explore the works of master photographers and the elements of successful photographs. The mini-step lesson plans are included in this unit also. After completing these preliminary steps, we will begin our major project.

Each student is given a (24) exposure disposable camera and a rubric that contains (17) required photographs. The photos on the rubric include a photo of their neighborhood, favorite place, immediate family member(s), sibling(s), extended family, friends, family tradition, cultural icon, (3) self-portraits in different poses, outside activity, other interests, form of exercise, pet(s), a special wall in their home, and one photo of the student's choice. I anticipate the students will make mistakes, and that is great. We learn from our mistakes, too. All (24) exposures must be taken. With a (24) exposure camera, and only (17) required photos each student should have "wiggle room" to experiment and make mistakes in this process. The students will incorporate their photos with other mediums and construct an assemblage that includes a construction, relief, graphite drawing, acrylic painting, found objects, collage, and photography. The project is entitled "Looking Through the Keyhole."

Each student constructs a box from black foam board. The construction must be measured exactly, and cut to specific dimensions. They use an Exact-O knife to cut the parts required to construct the rectangular box. Few students are successful in using an Exact-O knife the first time they use one.

Before using the Exact-O knife on this project, each student must practice, and I have them draw block letters of their name on poster board. Then they cut out the letters individually using a straight edge as a guide as they cut along the cutting lines. The cut-out letters are then glued onto a piece of 11" x 14" poster board and covered with aluminum foil. The aluminum foil wraps around the edges of the poster board and is taped down on the back side of the poster board. This creates a relief. Using a small piece of cloth, each student rubs over the foil surface lightly, and this reveals the outline of each letter. They then use water-based printer's ink and rub it over the surface of the foil very lightly taking off most of the color. Leave just a hint of color to highlight the letters without looking garish.

After completing this project, most students are ready to go to the "Looking Through the Keyhole" project. The back and sides are relatively easy to cut, but they have a more difficult time cutting out the keyhole shape out on the front surface of the assemblage. Because the front of the foam board is cut into the shape of a keyhole with a circular top, templates are provided to assist the students in being more successful in cutting this area out. Before assembling the box, clear acrylic sheeting is placed inside the keyhole opening and taped down with black masking tape. Black tape is used to assemble the parts of the box and finish off all the edges. The sides are first taped to the back. Because some students are taping impaired, begin taping the shorter top and bottom side edges to the back first. This gives them time to judge what half is and allows them to get the tape on the two surfaces evenly, with half on the side and half on the back. Now tape the sides to the back in the same manner. Tape the corners. All but the front is now constructed and is ready to accept the components of the assemblage. Do not put the front on at this time, but cut it when the other parts of the box are cut.

Using the elements and principles of design, each student places required objects including their photographs in their construction. Some of the required objects in addition to their photographs include a clay figure of their favorite icon or flower, a small item that reflects their cultural heritage, an item that describes the student's birthplace (This can be drawn, carved, painted, or made out of clay, but it must be an item that tells something about the city or country, and not the name of the city or country), a made or found item that reminds you of an extended family member, a drawing or photograph of yourself as a young child or as a baby, an item that is of importance in one of your family's traditions, a photo of yourself now in a pose of your choice, an icon of your favorite academic subject, and a representation of something you like to do after school. These items are all required and if all are included the student has met the minimum standards. Each student can add additional items of their choice and may include items such as photos of their family, their favorite place, or their home. The items must overlap. To build out some of the items use the foam core scraps from the keyhole front to glue to the back of the items. These scraps should not show from the front.

Tape the edges of the keyhole with the black masking tape. Because the top of the keyhole is circular applying the tape take different skills from applying the tape to straight edges. Apply the masking tape along the cut edge of the circular part of the keyhole, but do not try to press the tape down yet. Because the edge is circular cut the tape down to the top surface of the foam board about every one-half inch. Tape down each segment after you make each cut. Do one whole side of the circular part of the keyhole, and then turn it over and repeat the process on the back side of the circle. Now tape the straight edges on the bottom portion of the keyhole. At the corners do not overlap the tape. Overlap both pieces of tape and cut into both pieces of tape at a forty-five degree angle. Now lift up one piece of tape at the forty-five degree cut. Take out the small piece of tape from the bottom piece of masking tape. Re-adhere the two pieces of tape to the foam core. This leaves a clean edge called a mitered corner, and does not leave any messy overlapping edges. Now adhere the clear acrylic to the backside of the front keyhole piece. Use the black tape to tape for this also. Now, if you have completed the inside of your assemblage and have met all the requirements on your rubric, then tape the front to the sides of the rectangular assembled box. Your project is now ready for display.

This project requires significant set-up and clean-up, and is accomplished more quickly with students working in tandem. Allow a minimum of fifteen forty-five minute classes to complete this project. The students are actively engaged throughout the entire project, and cognitive and affective learning styles are employed. My curriculum is personalized to meet the needs of my students. I model everything I teach. Each model is completed at a level the students can understand and not overwhelmed by making it over their abilities to achieve.

I believe this project was so successful in my trial group because it included active tasks with tactile, kinesthetic, and analytical behavior styles. It also includes organization, reflection, and analysis. Sufficient time is allowed for each of these tasks. I am a strong believer that the success of the final project is directly attributable to the amount of effort you put into the planning of the project.

SEVENTH GRADE CLASS UNITS

In the seventh grade students have a choice between two art classes. One class is entitled "Arts and Humanities," and the other possibility is entitled "Architecture." Photography is an important element in each class. The goal in these classes is to let each student know that their world includes more than themselves and that each person can and does make a difference. Both classes photograph our immediate neighborhood. The Arts and Humanities Class uses photography to learn about contemporary pictographs and logograms in our society. The unit is entitled "Picture This." In this unit we explore our school and the surrounding area to find

contemporary pictographs. In our search we look for the purpose and significance of pictographs in our society. Furthermore, we look for areas where pictographs do not exist, but should. One purpose of this unit is to reinforce the importance of accurate, informative signage, and elicit change if needed. Our world extends beyond ourselves, and we must be more proactive in keeping our community responsive to current needs.

In the seventh grade Architecture Class, photography is used to create a set of architectural vocabulary columns from architectural elements photographed in our immediate school community. Before any student is successful in a discipline, they must first speak the language. The "Vocabulary Column" unit is designed to teach architectural elements and build columns for each architectural class to visually define and display architectural terms. This acts as a precursor to their first group building project for the semester. Each student is given a list of ten items with accompanying definitions. Each list is different, and the individual student is responsible for photographing their listed items on our neighborhood walk. I explore the neighborhood first and list all the architectural elements in our neighborhood. When we go on our architectural scavenger hunt I know that each item is available. The photos are developed, and each student backs their cropped photo and leaves a one-quarter edge to extend over the photo edge and give a neater look. This is glued to the left edge one inch from the edge. Using a top and bottom line as a guideline for all your letters write the word you photographed, and write the definition using the same method. Write it in pencil first, and then go over the pencil lines with a colored Sharpie of your choice. Laminate the strip. Now put a piece of Velcro at the left edge and one at the right edge of the strip and put it on the architectural column in alphabetical order.

EIGHTH GRADE CLASS UNITS

In the eighth grade photography serves a more artful purpose. The eighth grade unit is to elicit emotion and thoughtful reflection of their time during middle school. These students study "Twentieth Century Art," and collages hold an important place in twentieth century art. By the eighth grade students are mature enough to understand how to incorporate varied textures and different forms of art into one composition. This unit is entitled "Looking at My Middle School Years." Each student photographs portions of their world as it is at that given time and uses these photographic images in their collage. The collaged photos are adhered to a mask made by using plaster-covered gauze strips placed over their greased faces and allowed to dry. This process is messy and is easier to handle if it is done at the end of the day. One student lies down on the desk with a roll of paper towel placed under his or her head to use as a pillow. Use a headband to go around the student's hairline, and put a cotton ball over each eye and one in each ear. This will prevent any of the plaster getting into the students eyes or ears. Cover the rest of the student's face with Petroleum Jelly. Get a shallow pan of water and have a student cut strips of the plaster covered gauze into about one inch strips. Apply the cut plaster covered gauze strips on the petroleum jelly covered face overlapping the strips until the entire face is covered. Apply the strips with the bumpy side up. Smooth out the strips before you go onto the next strip. Do not place the strips into the water ahead of time, and do not get them wet until you are ready to use them. It usually takes about two overlapping layers over the entire face to make it rigid enough to keep its shape when it is taken off the face. It takes about ten minutes to dry. After the mask is dry, gently take your thumbs and place them under the mask at each side by the ears. Go around the edges of the mask until all the edges are loosened. Take the mask off, get the student up and wash off the student's face with soap and water. Clean up the work space. With three people working together it takes about forty minutes to complete each mask and clean up. Mark each mask as it comes off to avoid confusion later. Place the mask in a place that is not readily accessible with the face up.   The students have now made a life mask of their face to keep forever.

After making a mask for each student, the students now construct pointed wire pieces to replicate the rays of the sun. Attach the rays around the perimeter of the face mask to create a Sun Transformation Mask. This type of mask was an important part of the Kwakiutl peoples of northwestern Canada. Transformation masks are still used in many different kinds of celebrations and special events. The masks are colorful with many geometric patterns on them. Students adhere cut photos to chosen areas of the mask and leave some areas painted in geometric shapes. Before painting the mask surface or adhering any photographs the rays must be covered and the mask needs additional preparation also. The surface of the hardened plaster is rough and porous and does not accept paint or glued surfaces easily. Because of this, all the surfaces are paper mached to add rigidity, stability, and a smooth surface for painting and adhering photographs. The paper mache also goes over the wire rays along the edges of your mask. I use white Kraft paper strips run through clear wallcovering adhesive. Do not use any straight edges on the paper mache strips, and make certain you overlap the strips to make a smooth surface. The under layer you can use larger strips, but the top coat of paper mache should be smaller overlapping strips to give a finished, smooth surface. Allow to dry overnight for two days. While the mask is drying, let each student plan the design for their mask. They must include the face and the rays in designing the pattern, color usage, and photo placement. The art form is illustrated in SRA/McGraw-Hill's Art Connection's Artist Profiles (James 81). Specific elements required to complete the piece are included to add to the depth and complexity of the finished work. Each student must include several photographic elements, one of which is a self-portrait.

This is an intense project that involves significant teacher involvement and a personal approach with each student. Concepts are related to students' personal experiences and interests whenever possible. The project has a very messy stage that lasts almost one week. Do not begin this project if you are not able to handle the mess for that period of time. The entire project takes fifteen forty-five minute class periods. I especially appreciate this project because it fosters affective diversity and elicits personal expressions of feelings. Motivating the students is easy because they are involved and interested in completing the project. They use cognitive, active, and passive learning skills in creating their masks. Actually creating the mask is completed more easily if the students work in groups of three. One person is having the mask materials put on them, another person is applying the gauze, and the third person prepares the strips and maintains a fluid rhythm to complete the task within the given time frame. I alert my fellow teachers whenever we are working on extremely labor intensive projects. Sometimes there is a bottle neck at the sink when cleaning up, and the students are slightly late in getting to their next class.

Eighth grade students produce our yearbook. Effective photography has always been a problem. This first experience with the camera provides each person with a contrast between the visual field as seen by the human eye versus the visual experience as seen through the camera lens. Each student, using a digital camera, makes photographs incorrectly according to a given rubric. Some of the "wrong" things they are to do are shoot into the light, place the subject in front of a cluttered background, place the subject in front of a background with little contrast, stand ten feet or more away from the subject, take an action shot, move while taking a photo, stage all photos, cover an event without making a plan and take at least ten shots, take a photo under the trees as the sun sets, etc. After all of the photos are taken incorrectly, they will mount these photos with captions on a board and on a layout page without editing. Each student is now given the same type of shots using correct camera techniques. They then compare the photos. We all learn from our mistakes, and hopefully, these incorrectly photographed images will leave a lasting impression of what not to do.

As a teacher I encourage my students to be more effective by planning, organizing and visualizing the task, the setting, and the desired results. I always tell them to fill the frame, remember the rule of thirds, and keep the background simple and contrast the background color

from the color of the subject. Other general photo tips that are given to the students are to pay close attention to composition and to off-center their subject within the frame. Watch the lighting and aim for shooting outdoor shots in the morning or late in the afternoon to avoid glare and burn spots. Override the automatic setting and use the flash outdoors when taking portrait photos. Always give the people being photographed something to do, rather than mugging it up in front of the camera. Try to capture the event of the flavor of the event. Try to find the extraordinary rather than settling with the ordinary. To accomplish this consider changing your point of view, or turn your camera. Always keep in mind that your goal is to tell the story and accurately chronicle the history of your school for that year. Experiment and take risks.

When using a digital camera I instruct my photographers not to erase photos too quickly, and to use the viewfinder rather than the LCD. Fill the viewfinder frame and hug the subject when taking portrait. Hug the subject means to get the head and shoulders only. Looking through the viewfinder gives a better understanding as to what will actually be seen through the camera lens. Students often have difficulty in comprehending the concept that the camera lens sees differently from what out eyes see. Take a lot of pictures. Remember to delete unusable photos from the computer quickly to avoid using them if you get in a bind for applicable photos for your assignment. Carry more storage media than you think you need, and always take extra batteries on a photo assignment.

CONCLUSION

Photography is a powerful tool that assists us to go beyond merely looking and allows us to see. The use of photography in this unit creates visual literacy and teaches life skills that include negotiation, compromise, leadership, compassion, understanding, patience, and tolerance. It also allows students to see work well done, and gives students immediate positive feedback, and an outlet of expression to those students who have never considered themselves creative.

These units include a wide range of purpose. Before each unit begins, we look at works of various artists from around the world and discuss their approach to photography, their subject matter, and their purpose. We discuss the elements of their photographs that make them successful. We also familiarize ourselves with the parts of a camera and their importance and function, so that we can use the camera more effectively. I want my students to learn that photography is so much more than point and click. It takes planning, knowledge of the instrument, and purpose in the assignment. I want to create an awareness of the importance of planning, anticipating, lighting, and many other elements required to create a visual memory. I want them to think of photography as an art form and respect the medium. Through this respect we will create more meaningful projects, more expressive memories, and a better yearbook that students can look at in years to come and reflect on fond memories through photographs that skillfully tell a story and correctly chronicle the years' events. Sometimes imagery excludes logical thinking, but as a teacher I encourage each student to understand the power of visual imagery. Nothing I can do can take away a visual image once it is published in the yearbook. I want the students to realize that they are amateur photographers with a mission as important as professional photographers in their various projects and in our yearbook. Whether amateur or professional each photographer captures a moment in time that is lasting. They capture and record the history of our school that transcends current situations. Many times these projects and our yearbook are the only way of recalling this special time in a student's life. It is extremely important to record it thoroughly and accurately. It must also be inclusive to allow every student to remember their part of their school experience.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson One: Basic Photography

Although the purpose of photography in my classes is broad-based, certain fundamentals are essential to everyone who takes a photograph. Because of this our first lesson is "Basic Photography." My goals in this lesson are simple. First, I want each student to learn photographic terms. The initial Glossary of Photographic Terms includes Camera Angle, Candid Photographs, Compositions, Cropping, Depth of Field, Contrast, Cartridge, Close-Up, Frame, Flash, Film Speed, and other basic terms. A photograph that visually depicts the term is a part of the glossary. In some instances the photography of noted photographers is displayed, and in other cases the actual image of the object is included with the hand-out.

The second objective in this lesson is for students to understand the aesthetic quality of photography, and demonstrate this understanding through narrative, descriptive images. The third objective is for the student to determine an effective subject matter selection and concentrate on techniques to employ to have the image appear as it was envisioned. After thoroughly going over the terms, each student receives a twenty-four exposure disposable camera and a photo assignment randomly selected from our "Wheel of Fortune." The Wheel of Fortune is a spinning wheel that is numerically divided into one hundred parts. Prior to the beginning of the process each numbered part receives a correlated assignment. The students make assignment suggestions, and these suggestions are added to the assignment selections.

Along with their assignments each student receives a booklet composed of bullet items under three titles. The titles are "The Ten Basics for Better Photographic Composition," "Top Ten Techniques for Photography and Remedies for Problem Pictures," and "Photo Essay Requirements I and Things to Remember." Later the students receive "Photo Essay Requirements II."

The Kodak website <http://www.Kodak.com> is a wealth of information regarding basic photographic instruction and technique. This website has several articles that address these issues, and "The Ten Basics for Better Photographic Composition" is loosely based on these suggestions. The suggestions include: (1) Have a strong center of interest (focal Point); (2) Use the best camera angle; (3) Hug the subject; (4) Contrast between subject matter and background; (5) Be mindful of the background, and keep it simple as possible; (6) Take action shots; (7) Anticipate upcoming actions of the subject and move in close enough to get correct focus; (8) Conduct all the elements of a posed photograph as a conductor does with his orchestra; (9) Check photo settings each and every time to eliminate variables; and (10) Remember the thirds rule.

The "Top Ten Techniques for Photography" are: (1) Always have your camera ready. (2) Get close and hug your subject matter. (3) Keep people busy. (4) Get a contrasting background as simple as possible. (5) Place the subject slightly off center to create more interest. (6) Include foreground when taking a scenic photograph. (7) Look for the best possible lighting. (8) Hold the camera steady. Even hold your breath if necessary. (9) Use your flash as needed. (10) Select the correct camera style, film speed, and/or setting.

In "Remedies for Problem Pictures" a problem is given, a probable reason for the problem photo is stated, and a solution(s) is given. An example is Problem: Fuzzy photos; Reason: Shutter speed is too slow; Solution: Make certain you are holding the camera steady and that you focus on the subject.

Another major objective in this assignment is to learn what NOT to do. After teaching for many years it dawned on me that students do not always listen. Doing is a more effective means of communication. For this reason the "Photo Essay Requirements I" are all assignments that will render less than quality photographs, if they follow the essay requirements correctly. All twelve

of the required photos are using techniques that are usually DON'TS in the photographic world. Take a photo with your subject directly in front of an overhead light source with you facing the light source. Other examples are take an action shot and move the camera with your subject as you take the shot, or select a background as close in coloration as your subject. We all learn as much, if not more, from our mistakes as from our triumphs.

The essay requirements state to shoot the photos in numerical sequence as stated on the assignment. After the photos are taken according to the directions in Photo Essay Requirements I, the students receive "Photo Essay Requirements II." This allows the student to retake the photos according to the rules of basic photography.   After the film is developed each student assesses the differences between the photos from Photo Essay Assignment I and Photo Essay Assignment II. The students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade art classes make a presentation board that displays and self-critiques the photos. Making a Presentation Board is another lesson plan. Each student receives detailed information on correct methods of making an effective presentation board. Students place these instructions in their art folder for future use.

Lesson Two: Why Photographs Are Made

My students are photographing different subjects for different purposes. One class is taking architectural photos while another class is taking photos for the yearbook. Still others are photographing school life for artistic purposes, and another group takes photographs to explore their cultural heritage. Some of the photographs are documentary, and others are artistic. This lesson is multi-purposed to create dialog in each class and to brainstorm the reasons for photography.

Each must understand that individual vision, anticipation, and creative thinking add to the depth of visual communication of ideas, emotions, and attitudes. This is true whether photographing a mother and child, a scenic view, or an architectural structure; or creating a documentary or a masterful artistic statement. Photographs from an article by Erla Zwingle entitled "Seizing the Light" from the October 1989 issue of *National Geographic*, (530-547) clearly captures photos for all the reasons mentioned before. During the brainstorming, these reasons for photography will surface, and this article depicts photos of the famous and the unknown. One common thread is they all serve a purpose. For cultural input the work of William Henry Fox Talbot entitled "Lace" clearly shows this sensitive subject, and "Fallen Colossus" by Francis Frith examines an architectural motive. Julia Margaret Cameron gives an interesting portrait twist in her photo entitled "Pomona" that depicts Alice Liddell, the inspiration behind Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* while Andrew Joseph Russell starkly freezes horrors of war in his photo "Stone Wall, Rear of Fredericksburg with Rebel Dead". All effective photos and all made with different intentions.

In groups of four the students discuss a series of six photos from this article. After their group discussions we further discuss the elements that made these photos successful. Each student has a rubric that includes topics such as subject, position, composition, lighting, and purpose to begin the discussion. One purpose in this lesson is to demonstrate that there is a time and place for all photos, but the elements and principles of art are present in all the images. Regardless the subject matter, they all conform to tried and true standards of composition. Just as an artist sketches his subject prior to painting, the photographer envisions his image before shooting. It takes organization, creative thinking, planning, and an understanding of the available materials and environment. Good photography is seldom by accident, but rather the conscious or sub-conscious planning of the artist.

Lesson Three: Architectural Neighborhood Find

For architectural students this is a perfect method to better remember architectural terms. Each student receives a page with twenty squares on it that indicate architectural photos they must take in a neighborhood hunt for architectural items. The photographic assignments are unique because all students have different elements to photograph. One square may indicate they need to photograph two types of windows and four building materials. No other student will have these items on their rubric. We photograph these items and define them. They are then added to our Vocabulary Columns for all to see. This assignment is a precursor to a building project, so it is imperative that all students have a working vocabulary of the discipline. We will use these now laminated, defined, photographic strips in various ways to make certain that all understand the architectural terminology and have a working knowledge of the vernacular. We will use them in a game of concentration, and in a to the death grudge match of *Jeopardy*. After all, when we play *Jeopardy* in class my students know food is at stake. The winning team gets a food reward if their team winds the challenge.

Lesson Four: Looking Through the Keyhole

This assemblage project is designed for our incoming sixth grade students. Many cultures are represented in our school, and we celebrate our differences.   With a photographic rubric the assignment is to tell us about your family through photographs, drawings, paintings, iconic items, etc. Each student is given a (24) exposure disposable camera and a rubric that contains (17) required photographs. The photos on the rubric include a photo of their neighborhood, favorite place, immediate family member(s), sibling(s), extended family, friends, family tradition, cultural icon, (3) self-portraits in different poses (i.e. the student, the tennis player, the child), outside activity, other interests, form of exercise, pet(s), a wall in their home, and one photo of the student's choice. Photograph an item of traditional importance used for special occasions or an item that is clearly meaningful in your country of origin/ family heritage. The students incorporate their photos with other mediums including, but   not limited to, a relief, graphite drawing, acrylic painting, found objects, and collage. These items go into a student constructed assemblage. The student constructs a box from black foam board that is 14" x 22" x 3" in size. The front panel of the construction is shaped like a keyhole. Clear acetate on the inside of the keyhole opening protects the interior and keeps it dust fee. Black masking tape holds the construction together. Using the elements and principles of design each student conceptualizes and implements the placement of required elements into their construction.

Student assessment is based on effective use of required elements, use of balance and symmetry, construction techniques, the project and effective communication of unique traditions and cultural diversity, and project completion. Each student writes an accompanying legend for each included item and relays its significance. These are proudly displayed in the school to demonstrate our diversity and commonalities.

Lesson Five: Capture the Moment

This lesson is for yearbook students specifically. Photography is our weak spot each year, despite numerous efforts to effect change. It can be extremely frustrating for the students. Only some of the situations can be considered "do over" photos because most of the time the event is past, and will not reoccur nor can it be reconstructed. This presents a real dilemma, and is avoidable if the photographers follow a few simple techniques. Like all of my classes the yearbook staff members will do Photo Essay I and Photo Essay II. The subject matter for their essays is thematic and clearly defined. The photos are specific and include challenging situations with lighting and uncooperative subjects. Digital photography is our photographic method in yearbook. In using digital cameras it seems that students would easily recognize when they do not have a usable image, and take another one. It seems that way, but it doesn't happen. They

think they can manipulate the image until it is serviceable. This is wishful thinking in most instances. This year we are going to really discuss the elements that make a photo successful. With the images of many genre photographers we will discuss, explore, investigate, and succeed in understanding the importance of composition and controlling variables. To this end we will have several discussions regarding photo essays and do mock assignments to better understand the capabilities of the camera in our various settings on campus.

My number one goal in this lesson is to get better quality photographs for our yearbook. To do this the staff members must understand the importance of organization, vision, and creative thinking. The staff member completes an organizational plan for every assignment and makes a page layout prior to taking any photographs. If they know they need a vertical shot of a group during a cross country track meet, two individual shots of people completing the race, a photo of the sponsor, and a group shot of the entire cross country team, perhaps the planning will assist in producing better quality photographs that do tell the story. They must understand what they want to accomplish with the page, and that they are solely responsible for the production of that page. They are capturing a moment that will outlast their tenure at our school, and this is significantly different from any other assignment they have had during their time at our school.

Evaluation is measured in increments based on their individual assignments. In developing each assignment yearbook staff members produce an organizational plan for each assignment, develop an action plan, and compose a manual page using the standard graphic grid design standards. The approved pages are then produced on the computer in the appropriate program. Students save a copy on disk, and place a hard copy in our yearbook page back-up book. Deadlines are given for each of these steps, and grades are based on the successful completion of each of these assignments.

Lesson Six: Something Old is New Again

Each year our library offers undesirable books to students. Seldom are all the books taken. We use these "unwanted" books in this lesson to recycle a usable item into a personal journal. The journal includes many elements: writing, photography, collage, painting and any combination of these elements.

Taking an existing book with about thirty pages in it, the eighth grade students paint, collage, texturize, or use any other low relief, almost two dimensional techniques on each book page. They cover selected parts of each page, and leave select existing portions of the book to leave as is to create their journals. The photographs are selected from existing unused yearbook photos and placed in the book after each page is customized. The photographs are integrated into the design concept of the page. The rubric for this project states that photographs must include the student, his friends, and activities that represent him for each year he attended our school. This serves as a personal journal of their tenure at our school, and a lasting memory of friends and events that fade too quickly with time.

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