

Reading and Writing Pictures

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INTRODUCTION

Students are bombarded with graphics and use them for much of their information. They prefer to get their information via TV, movies, and computers, all of which provide them with a visual and aural environment. Students, especially those from the inner city, are no longer interested in books or long portions of text. They want their text to come in short blocks, mostly as explanations of pictures or other graphics.

Modern textbooks have responded to this phenomenon by providing more visuals. In addition, they set up their pages to use text as part of the graphic presentation with changes in font styles, sizes, and colors. In previous generations, text was the main message and was illustrated with graphics. Today graphics are becoming the main medium, and text is used to support visual explanations. Text is becoming part of the visual in the choice of background colors, white space, and colors and style of fonts. Today's students work within a graphical framework while most teachers work within a textual framework.

The speed of this transformation is overwhelming and needs to be addressed immediately if teachers and students can continue to communicate effectively. Teachers need to become more image-oriented, and both students and teachers need to become more visually literate. They need to be able to both “read” and “write” visually and be able to critically evaluate what they see as well as the visuals they make themselves.

Children often are not able to give pictures and other visuals the critical evaluation that is needed to separate the message intended by the picture from the supporting information. They often don't use the clues offered by clothing, props, and body language to get maximum information from a photograph. They also don't verbalize the message and understand the parts of it that are informational versus the parts that are affective, nor can they evaluate the quality of the information. Especially in photographs used in advertising, they often react to the affective part without really understanding the hidden agendas. They are not even able to first verbalize the intended message and then critique it for accuracy and truth.

Research shows that when students view advertisements, they mostly respond to the colors and emotions portrayed rather than critically evaluating the message. They also need to consider the purpose of the graphics as part of the total understanding of the message, and reveal the decisions the artist made in producing the picture. In short, they need to be taught to critically evaluate pictures before accepting them as truth. Students, and do many adults, consider photographs to be truthful and need to know ways photographs can be manipulated and also be trained in the ethics involved in photographic manipulation.

In today's world, all students need the life skill of being able to produce visuals for particular audiences and purposes. They have to learn the “grammar” of visuals so they can build compelling pictures and other graphics. They will be using pictures in every kind of presentation and as part of their everyday communications. They need to be ready to learn and work in a multimedia world. Students need to develop the higher order thinking skills of being able to

imagine and create with symbols and to solve problems by designing and inventing with symbols. They will be working in a much more visual world than we have today and teachers need to be able to help them develop the skills they will need.

Teachers are finding it harder and harder to connect with students because students don't like to read long pieces of text. They prefer to get their information via pictures, other graphics, aurally, and through interactive games. The main way they accept text is in small blocks accompanied by lots of graphics. Most teachers don't understand this concept because they learned almost completely through text and lectures. Today's students don't have the patience or attention spans to learn by this methodology, so teachers need to find ways to connect with them using their preferred learning methods. Since all students love photographs, especially ones they make, I expect them to be much more eager to learn, to produce products, and to be willing to work with each other and share their work and ideas about it, both verbally and in writing.

By providing the students with a unit on reading and writing photographs, I hope to teach them how to see and understand the nuances of a photograph, how to understand the purpose of the photograph, and how to evaluate a photograph in standard terminology. They will begin to understand the choices the photographer made in producing the picture and see how using photographic rules help get the viewers interested in the message, as well as clarifying the intended message. They will learn to use the various parts of the photograph, such as backgrounds, props, and body language to see how the message is developed. Students will use photographs to aid them in developing a larger vocabulary both by learning the language of photographic evaluation and learning new descriptive words, especially the words of emotions.

Research has shown that children that produce art work first and then write about it, produce much richer, more detailed writing. I believe that if children will first make photographs or bring family pictures to class, or even choose a picture from a site on the Internet, then write about it, their writing will improve. This strategy should also motivate them to work harder at producing a rich, detailed description and will help to give them more ideas to write about.

Eventually the students will learn to make photographs and then to plan photographs that confer their desired message. Just as reading and writing reinforce each other, evaluating and making pictures will also reinforce the concepts involved in mastering visual literacy. And by giving the student options in their choice of pictures, both to critique and to make, and by allowing them to work on projects involving the making of pictures to illustrate ideas and themes, they will be able to use their strengths in their various learning styles, and thus more students will be successful. They will also have the opportunity to develop their higher learning skills as they solve problems and develop products. And they will learn the language of negotiation, which is mostly lacking in my inner city students, as they learn to dialog and work with each other. As they learn to be proficient in creating pictures that illustrate an intended message, they will also become more able to critique commercial media.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Students at Long Middle School come from widely divergent cultures. They represent sixty-four or more different countries, including several in Africa, many Hispanic countries, and the Balkans. Eighty-five percent of our students are Hispanic, seven percent are African or African-American, and five percent are Asian. The Asian children include many children from Pakistan who are Muslims. Forty-six percent of the students are in English-as-a-second-language programs, and, throughout the year, we get in students who speak little or no English. We are a one hundred percent Title I school. Ninety-seven percent of our students receive free lunch. Most of the students are also inner city poor children with all the attendant problems of this population.

This year our ranks have been swelled by over 60 students from Louisiana that are refugees from Hurricane Katrina, most of them African-American but from a different culture than many of our own African-American students. Most these children are suffering emotionally from the trauma they have experienced and often have trouble concentrating on school. Also, many of them have missed many days of school because they are traveling back to and forth from Louisiana with their parents. Many from the rest of our student population have also suffered traumas in their countries or have dysfunctional families which impact their ability to focus on school work.

Because so many of our students live in poverty, they do not function like middle class children do. They come to school without structures for learning and so cannot “hook” new learning to old. They spend very little time talking to adults, and most have never been read to by an adult. So, the longer they are in school, the further behind they fall in vocabulary norms. This causes their reading levels to be extremely low. Most of them feel it is punishment to have to read a book.

The average reading level of our school is 4th grade with many students reading at first or second grade levels. They value personal relationships and entertainment rather than the middle class values of education and striving for success. For the most part, they don’t demonstrate an interest in learning, and it is a struggle for the teachers to connect with them and get them excited and interested in their education. Our students don’t get much time to practice higher learning skills because their teachers are focused on teaching them lower-level skills needed in order to pass the TAKS to the exclusion of other skills.

Most of our students do not seem to be verbal learners, in spite of the fact that teachers mostly value this learning style. This view may be affected by the fact that so many of them are currently learning English, and some speak almost no English at all. Therefore, many of them can get almost no information verbally. They can get a little more information from reading text than they can from hearing information, but they function best if they can see demonstrations, graphics, still pictures, and movies, and are given time to think in their own languages, then translate the information back to English. They also do much better if they are given the opportunity to perform activities that allow them to get a kinesthetic notion of what they are to do. They are able to read and write English before they are comfortable speaking it.

I believe the language of pictures will prove to be much more effective in helping children to become critical thinkers than that of text in English. Also many of the students demonstrate a love of art and often produce art when they are supposed to be doing something else. I hope to connect to these students via photographs, especially the ones they pre plan by sketching them. Middle school students are still very egocentric and love pictures, especially those about themselves. The students also regularly bring pictures to share with their friends, again, often during times they are supposed to be doing something else. And since many of my students are reluctant to discuss verbally, I’ll give them lots of opportunity to be in discussions on the bulletin board part of Nice Net or within a protected blogging site. This allows my students to have the time they need to reflect, translate from English to their first language, then respond and finally translate back to English. Many of my students are completely unable to do this verbally but can be successful if they are responding in writing and are given extra time to do so. And, by using an on-line collaborative tool, they too can take part in discussions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND THEORIES

The world is changing rapidly in many ways. In my early life, I got all my information from books, magazines, and the radio. My family didn’t have a phone or television until I was in high school. But today’s students, even many immigrant children and children of poverty, get their information from television and the Internet. Even the magazines they favor have many more

visuals and are presented within a graphical framework rather than the traditional textual framework. The makers of textbooks now have to design their texts to also be within the graphical framework favored by students. Textbook editors are adding many more graphics and working with color rather than just having a few black and white pictures to illustrate the text.

Today's students have to be ready to work within a complex multimedia world. The jobs they will do may not even exist at present, but they will be expected to be able to use all kinds of graphics and symbols while synthesizing products. One rapidly developing field is that of computer simulation to teach skills and give information. Tomorrow's workers will also be problem solving within a graphical interface. All students need to learn to not accept visual information at its face value, or be only emotionally affected, but to critically evaluate it for the validity of the presenter or reporter, and be able to compare one piece of information to others on the same subject. When looking at photographs as part of information and persuasion, they also need to understand the purpose of the photographer.

But our students don't visually distinguish between content and advertising or understand the slant of the material they read. Students today are learning much of what they know from the Internet but do not have the skills to critically evaluate the various pieces of this information. They are mostly working unsupervised and learning on their own, so it is imperative that schools teach them the tools of visual, media, and informational literacy.

Visual literacy proceeds in stages, much like textual literacy. Stage one is storytelling – relating pictures to life. Stage II is beginning to distrust the judgment of others and realize others see meaning not yet accessible to them. This is the deductible stage where students can begin to apply strategies, see how colors contribute to meaning, and ferret out the decisions of the artist. Students will learn how to figure out the choices the artists made in choosing subjects, for example, or ways of creating space. This is the stage in which visual literacy takes place – therefore the stage we should be teaching using stage one as a springboard (Yenawine).

Research has shown that children who are reluctant to write will only produce “bare bones” writing in traditional writing classes. But if they are allowed to draw or paint a picture and then write about it, they are much more eager to write and their writing is much more descriptive and evocative (Andrzejczak). And photographs have been used with young women to allow them to talk about their lives in a more complex way than they were otherwise capable of doing. These women first took pictures of various aspects of their lives, and then selected the five they thought were most expressive of their feelings about their lives. Then they wrote about why they selected the photographs and what they felt each photograph meant. This caused them to both be more critical of and expressive about what was happening in their lives (Tannenbaum).

I expect that I will get some of the same results as I let children use photographs made by themselves or members of their families and then get them to write about them. Children will be willing to write more and in richer terms. And after other students question them about the pictures, they will be able to further develop their writing by adding more descriptors.

THE UNIT

The theme of this unit will be to read and write visually because, just as students need to both read and write to become better textual communicators, they need to both evaluate and make photographs to become better visual communicators. And the students will learn to translate visual messages into textual messages. This twelve week unit will be designed to give the students visual literacy via photography. But it will also be used to interest students in writing and will help expand their vocabularies. Students will learn to “read” the messages in photographs, to choose photographs that express different emotions and concepts, and to tell stories about their families and cultures with photographs.

Students will also learn to take pictures that follow the rules of photographic composition, and illustrate emotions and concepts. They will be writing reflections about the pictures, including a discussion of why they chose the pictures, and providing captions and stories to go with the pictures. Much of their discussion will be via Nice Net, an on-line collaborative tool, so they will be doing lots of writing. They may also be working within protected blogging sites that allow pictures to be posted.

My students come from many cultures, but they do not understand or respect each other's cultures. One of my goals is to use photographs to give them ways to explain their cultures to one another. Another goal is to use photographs to illustrate behaviors that will allow them to be successful in life and to help them develop a sense of community. Photography can be a tool that will help them to learn to be proud of their cultures and accepting of other cultures, and to realize the commonality of human expression. A further goal is to help them learn more vocabulary and to be able to write more descriptively and critically. They will evaluate news photographs and compare information gleaned from the picture to information from the textual story. Finally, they will learn how pictures can be manipulated and thus become less accepting of pictures as being truthful.

Teaching strategies will be whole-class discussions, small-group discussions with a secretary writing down remarks to share with the whole class, possibly via Nice Net a free on-line collaborative tool. Students will also use Nice Net to do bulletin board responses to visual prompts and then respond to another student's comments. Or I will use a protected blogging site that allows pictures to be posted so we can see both the picture and the responses to it in one place. Other students will be able to comment on both the picture and the discussion of it. Students will do short activities in providing comments and write short stories about selected pictures or provide titles and captions. This will be fairly structured and defined and graded with rubrics. These students must be provided with both information and the structure to allow them to process it, especially at first. We will do small and large projects involving choosing pictures that illustrate a theme, then in taking their own pictures for a theme. They will also do some photo manipulation to insert pictures of themselves into other pictures or to do photo montages about themselves and their hopes and dreams. This will aid them in understanding photo manipulation. Students will also do reflections, either in Nice Net or on the protected blog site. Other students will be able to respond to these reflections to further the dialog between students.

Evaluations will mostly be of products based on rubrics. There will even be a rubric for writing titles and captions for pictures. But students will also have to demonstrate mastery of words used to analyze and critique photographs and the words they will be illustrating with photographs. They will have to get in the habit of using both spell check and an on-line dictionary to check their work. Students will get part of their response grade in using assigned words correctly. They will also have this component included in the rubrics for their own pictures. Students will get part of their grade from doing the required postings. They will be required to both do original postings and to respond, in the correct polite manner, to postings by other students. Student reflections will also be used as tools to evaluate their understanding and, if necessary, mini lessons or peer tutoring will be used to correct misunderstandings or lack of understanding. If possible, students needing extra help will be peer tutored in their native language.

During the unit, the students will use photographs from home as well as photographs taken by professional photographers. Then they will learn how to use digital cameras to make photographs. The unit will culminate in a project where the students will select 3-5 words or concepts that are part of successful lifestyle and would allow people of different cultures in to live and work together in harmony. Then working in pairs, they will take, edit, and select the best pictures as defined by a rubric to build a portfolio. They will be graded as to how well the image supports the

idea they intended to represent as well as how well they defended their choices. They will also be graded on the choice of title and caption they add to their pictures. The students will build their portfolios into either web pages or Power Point presentations to share with the class and the school.

Photography should be a medium that is interesting to students and will give them lots to discuss and write about. They should be more able to express themselves, first in pictures, then in writing and speaking about them. In addition, they will be learning the language of photography description and evaluation, as well as words that describe emotions and activities, so this unit will enlarge their vocabularies, help them better express themselves orally and in writing, and allow them to begin to learn to visually express themselves effectively. By taking concepts from text and forming visual expressions, they will develop a deeper understanding of the concepts. And they will be developing higher level skills of synthesis and problem solving in the process of creating visual messages. They will work in teams of four to make pictures that illustrate a theme, so they will also have to develop good team-working skills and improve their communication skills, while engaging in problem solving. These are the predominant skills asked for by today's employers, so they should also be better prepared for the work world.

Since most of our students speak English as a second language, and come from at least sixty-four different countries, I'll focus first on pictures that talk about their family history and culture. This will start the students in stage one of visual literacy, so we can build on that. Also these pictures will be most important to them, so they will be more interested in talking and writing about them. If they don't have pictures of their own, they will be able to select pictures from the Internet and then use those pictures to evaluate and write about.

First they will mostly talk about the story the picture tells. Then they will learn to use the backgrounds, clothing, body language, and props to get more information from the picture, as well to determine the message of the picture. They will be able to evaluate photographs in terms of whether the picture is a truthful depiction of an event or place and to decide the intent of the photographer.

They will also learn to "write" visually by learning the elements of digital photography. They will become able to plan a picture to portray a theme or give a desired message. By the end of the unit, they will be able to critique pictures made by themselves and others both as to the photographic excellence and the quality of the message. The portion of the unit that will focus on planning and making pictures that give portray an intended message is a very important component in build visually literate students because just as students learn reading by writing and writing by reading, they need both the ability to critique pictures as well as make them to become visually literate. Research shows that in making pictures and reflecting them, students maximize their learning.

We often work within Nice Net, an on-line collaborative tool, so each student can respond to questions about a given photograph and then students can reply to one or more students. So in addition to having oral discussions, we will also be having written discussions about the meaning of the picture, whether or not it is giving a strong message, and how the student feels when looking at it. I will adapt the conferencing section to have the students express the message they get from a particular picture. The downside of Net Nice is that it only supports text. I may be able to use a protected blogging site to allow the students to add the picture and the discussion of it. This would allow students to discuss several pictures at once and immediately relate the discussion to the picture. We can also insert pictures into a Word document, add a discussion, and print them out to share with the class. I may also be able to use Quia (a subscription site for interactive learning games and quizzes) to build some interactive activities that will help them

learn vocabulary. Students will also maintain dictionaries of terms and learn a few new words each class session.

I also use Nice Net to provide the lesson objectives, the written description of the activities, and the assignments. This allows the children who cannot understand either written or spoken English, an opportunity to use Babel Fish, a free on-line translating tool, to get a more complete sense of the assignment. Some of them will complete their assignment in their native language at first, then, as the year progresses, become more able to produce work in English. I have to modify for them so they have fewer assignments involving writing or allow them to write shorter responses. Using Nice Net reinforces the spoken directions for all students and also allows students to get assignments they missed while absent.

I can increase metacognition among the students by having them post reflections on how well they met the objectives and which objectives they believe they need to have more practice in meeting. Students also use Nice Net to communicate with me outside of class, which I see as another very positive reason for using it. This past year, I was both able to help students with my assignments as well as those from other teachers and was able to respond to personal needs of students. We also use it as part of our group work. And since most of our students will have to use collaborative on-line tools in their work, they are getting a very important life skill.

After the students start to learn to critique pictures, the students will learn the rudiments of using digital cameras by taking a tutorial and practicing using them. Then we will do some mini projects to make photos that illustrate or document, tell a story, or advertise. I'll find examples of pictures that portray a message, and then have the student plan pictures using writing and story boards that would illustrate an idea or concept. The students will then do a project in which they determine the message they intend to convey and then illustrate it with pictures. It will be judged with a rubric, and the other students in the class will use the rubric to judge the photos to further demonstrate that they have mastered visual literacy. From previous work with rubrics, I have found that having the whole class grade projects with rubrics is a great learning exercise and sometimes is the only way to get the students to use the rubric as a self-evaluation tool. I give at least one lesson on grading with a rubric as I show the students an example of a project I'm assigning.

We'll also do lessons on reading and writing ads since students usually only "get" the affective part of an ad and need to be able to objectively evaluate ads. They also need to develop a sense that pictures, contrary to common opinion, can lie, so the unit will include a few lessons in manipulating photos along with discussions regarding the ethics of doing so. They will also have a few specific lessons in how pictures are used in advertising and how easy it is to accept the message offered by the advertiser rather than critically comparing the message with what they know or can find out about a product.

READING AND WRITING PICTURES - SAMPLE LESSONS

Overview

I am planning to do a 12 week unit on reading and writing pictures. I'll introduce it by having students bring in favorite family pictures as well as having pictures about families, preferably from Hispanic, Balkan, and African cultures. I'm also interested in having students start to understand the commonality of humanity that runs through the many cultures represented at our school. I want them to learn the language of photography and to use photography to illustrate major themes of what makes a successful citizen of the world, as well as to understand the themes that are common to all cultures.

This unit will be taught in a computer lab, so it is strongly based upon computer and Internet use. It can be modified to be taught as a photography class with a journal to keep up with the

written work. Copies of each picture could be provided to each student to glue into their journal. Parts of it would also be a great tool to use in a writing class. The teacher can supply copies of pictures to the students or project pictures brought in by students or from on-line sources. (See the bibliography for sites of useful photographs.)

The unit will begin with students viewing pictures, both from their own families and those provided by me. Students will begin to learn the vocabulary used to critique pictures as well as words needed to describe emotions and actions seen in the pictures. They will compare what they see in the pictures to happenings in their own lives. Students will work individually as well as in groups to critique pictures. At first they will be provided with the structure they need to completely assess the pictures and compare what they see to their own lives in terms of emotions, actions, celebratory events, etc. This will begin with one or two lessons and then become the initial activity of succeeding class periods. They will also write titles and captions for pictures they see. They will compare their critiques, titles and captions with that of other students in the class to make group comments that include those of all the students in the group.

Among the first lessons will be one in learning to use the scanner, so the students can digitize the pictures and the teacher can put them up on an on-line album site, so they will be accessible to all the students. Then the students will take a short course in taking pictures with a digital camera, including how to operate the camera and how to follow composition rules to make pictures that produce a strong visual message. Students will also use Photoshop Elements to edit their pictures on the computer. They will get several lessons in how to use the program and learn when and how to use the various tools. I will provide mini lessons throughout the course so students can fix saturation, contrast, and brightness problems, and learn how to use the cropping tool. They will also learn how to change the pixel density to print pictures or to use them on-line. They will learn to change the size of the pictures and save each version with a separate name so they will have the correct version for the task.

Then, working in teams of four, the students will use the digital camera to produce an album of pictures that illustrate concepts that make successful citizens. They will be given concepts to illustrate and will have to turn in a plan for each picture, using descriptions or sketches, before they set it up and take it. They will have to consider what props they need and how to get them in a timely fashion. They will have to defend their decisions in writing as part of their assignment. They will provide titles and captions for each picture. The entire set of pictures made by the students will be put in on-line albums or in a Power Point slide show on-line, so the students can share their pictures with the rest of the school as well as with their friends and relatives. They will also be allowed to print a few of their best shots to take home since many of them do not have computers at home. We will also put some of our best work up as printed pages from Power Point and add the student reflections on the print so the students can have the picture and the reflection on the same printout.

Unit Objectives:

Technological

- Students will be able to use a scanner.
- Students will be able to organize pictures into folders by themes or dates.
- Students will be able to use on-line photo storage.
- Students will be able to edit photos with Photoshop Elements.
- Students will be able to build multimedia shows with their pictures.
- Students will use digital cameras.
- Students will learn and use the rules of photographic composition.
- Students will take and edit digital pictures to illustrate themes.

Visual Literacy

- Students will be able to critique photos in terms of lighting, composition, and use of color.
- Students will be able to describe what is happening in the pictures, what emotions are being portrayed, and compare the pictures to their own lives.
- Students will be able to decipher the purpose of the picture and decisions made by the photographer.
- Students will be able to take interesting pictures using the principles of composition.
- Students will be able to express themes with pictures.

Literature/Writing

- Students will be able to communicate the stories they read in the pictures, discuss them in terms of photographic composition, lighting, and use of color and be able to critique pictures that are illustrating themes as to whether the photographer fulfilled his intention.
- Students will be able to supply appropriate titles and captions to photographs either supplied or made by themselves.

Multicultural

- Students will be able to compare their cultures to that of other students in the class.
- Students will be able to see common threads of humanity within all cultures.
- Students will make pictures that illustrate themes and concepts of the brotherhood of man.
- Students will make pictures that illustrate concepts of good citizenship.

Lesson 1 – Scan Pictures and Begin Discussions of Pictures

This lesson will allow students to cycle between three activities after a whole class introduction to the unit, review of a few pictures, and demonstration on how to use the scanner.

Materials

- Pictures students have brought from home. (Note: Start this assignment at least a week in advance of the unit and also work with some students outside of class to teach them to use the scanner. Gather the early pictures to use in class at first.)
- Teacher-provided pictures of family life.
- Scanners – need 7 or more if at all possible.
- Laminated directions on how to use the scanner – one set for each scanner.
- Computers where students can save their pictures in their own files. (Or on-line site to save the pictures)
- Set of laminated instructions for using the scanner and saving pictures to student folders. (1 per scanner)
- Form for students to use to respond to the pictures.
- All these lessons will take place in computer lab so the students will be working on computers to do their writing and get their materials and assignments. Each student has his/her own computer. The teacher has a computer and a projector, and flash card to use to gather up student work and allow students to show work to the rest of the class.
- Extra flashcards (if student pictures need to be moved to their own computers).

Objectives

- To be able to scan pictures and make digital files.
- To organize a digital picture file so pictures can be found.
- To know how to find out properties of the picture.
- To begin the vocabulary of photography and photographic criticism.

I will introduce the lesson and either use a student's picture or provide one to show them how to describe and critique pictures. The students will be guided to fill out a form for this picture as the teacher and students discuss it. On the second picture, the students will use the form while working as partners and then check their work with a class discussion. Then I will demonstrate how to use a scanner. Finally, I will show students how to save their work and make them name their folders following a common pattern.

The Rotation

Activity 1

Some of the students will work in groups of two and take turns using the scanner and then saving their own pictures in their student folders. One person will read the directions while the other scans. Then they will change places, so the other student can scan. Then they will work either individually or in groups of 4 during the rest of the assignments. I will set up groups of 4 students, and then let them divide into groups of two to use the scanners.

Activity 2

Then each student will each move his/her pictures to their own folders. The scanners may either be moved around the room and hooked up to individual student's computers and then the pictures added to each student's picture file, or the scanners may be at dedicated computers and the pictures will have to be physically moved to student computers via flash card or CD.

Activity 3

Students will also look at assigned pictures that illustrate family life or resonate in some way with how their family lives. Then working in groups of two, they will discuss a picture and then each fill out a form following the directions and demonstration of the teacher that was given to the whole class. Students can start and stop this activity to do the first and second rotations.

Suggested questions for guided critiquing of the pictures

(This will be used at first, than a more detailed one will be provided as students learn the rules of photography and more about critiquing pictures. Finally they should begin to be able to critique a photograph without needing a lot of structure to guide them. Questions on composition, lighting and use of color will be added to later evaluations)

- What picture are you looking at? (If working in Word, students can paste in a small copy of the picture here.) Otherwise, just a brief description or use the picture's title and source (hyperlink or student's name).
- Why do you think this picture was taken?
- Does the picture tell a story? If so, retell the story you see in the picture in words.
- What emotions do you see portrayed in the picture?
- What information about the people can you get from the background of the picture?
- Are the clothes important to the picture? What information or feelings do they give portray?
- What information do you get from the background in this picture?

- What do you think the most important thing is about the picture?
- Do you or your family have pictures that tell similar stories as this one?
- Does this picture remind you of something about your family or friends? If so, what?
- How do you feel when you look at this picture? Why?

Activity 4

Students will begin a glossary of photographic terms as well as a glossary of descriptive terms. The students will select words they don't know, and the teacher will also review words used in the lessons and assign words that most of the class does not know. (Note the words the students will eventually have to illustrate and assign them as needed for the student glossaries.) They can work on this activity when not doing activities 1 and 2. This activity will continue throughout the unit. It is suitable to use as a sponge activity in successive days. Students will keep their dictionary as a Word document and print out pages as they complete them. They will be to match words with their definitions and to be able to follow directions containing the words or include them when writing about pictures.

Technological Glossary for Reading and Writing Pictures

Resources

- <http://hubcap.clemson.edu/~jwfoltz/Courses/WFB493PH/subjects/terms/printout/glossary2.htm>
- http://support.radioshack.com/support_tutorials/audio_video/digvid-glossary.htm
- Use the words and definitions from the following site for developing language to evaluate pictures:
<http://nuovo.com/southern-images/analyses.html>

Ambient Light	Contrast	Soft focus
Artificial light	Cropping	Landscape mode
Angle of View	Depth of Field	Portrait mode
Background	Highlights	Pixel
Foreground	ISO	Pixelization
Backlighting	LCD panel (Liquid Crystal Display.)	JPEG
Candid Pictures	Sharpness	Preview Screen
Posed Pictures	Brightness	Rangefinder
Overexposure	Color Correction	Red-eye
Resolution	Digital Zoom	<i>Note: Add terms for tools and operations from photo editing as students use tutorials. Add emotion and descriptive words as needed.</i>
Underexposure	Optical Zoom	
Viewfinder, Optical	Download	
Viewfinder, Electronic	DPI	
Thumbnail	Flat Bed Scanner	
Close-Up	Focus	
Composition		

Lesson 2 Learning To Manage Files and Folders of Pictures

Materials

- On-line picture storage site where each student can upload pictures.
- Computers – at least 1 for every 2 students. 1 student per computer is better.
- On-line storage site: Webshots, Sony's Image Station, Snapfish, etc.

Objectives

- To be able to scan pictures and make digital files.
- To organize a digital picture file so pictures can be found.
- To know how to find out properties of the picture.
- To begin the vocabulary of photography and photographic criticism
- To be able to upload and store picture on an on-line photo storage site.

Note: The following activities will be on a rotating basis so different students can be scanning or uploading. They will do activities one and two when they are not doing the other activities.

Whole Class Lesson

I will demonstrate how to start albums and upload pictures to a picture storage site. Students will save class ID and Password. Students will name their albums with first name and first 2 letters of their last name plus the number of their class. They may use the underscore if needed. Each student will have his/her own album. They will later put in albums of their finished products with titles and captions. The albums can be differentiated by numbers along with the student identification.

Activity 1

Students will first write about a picture supplied by a student or the teacher. They will respond to the teacher's directives in Nice Net in the Conferencing Section. [Nice Net is a free on-line communication and collaboration tool that we use in our Technology Class (www.nicenet.org).] Students can do their work from home, the public library or from other computers in the school. This also allows my students who are shy or who have limited English to have the extra time they need to respond. And if my students cannot understand the English assignment, they are taught how to copy/paste all or parts of the assignment into Babel fish (<http://babelfish.altavista.com/>), so they can read the translation. Some of my students then have to respond in Spanish at first, but most of them progress to using English during the course of the year. I reward them by allowing them to have shortened assignments or skipping some of the repetitive assignments if they are actively working to use English. This will be one of 2 grades they will get.

Activity 2

After students have considered a picture and written about it, they will work in groups of four and share what they thought about the emotion and story of the picture. They will then respond to two of their classmate's writing within Nice Net and either agree and complement him/her on some insight or add some new insight that student missed. This will be the second grade they will get on picture response. This activity will result in students gaining more vocabulary.

Activity 3

Students will be given time to continue to scan in family pictures and move their files to their own folders.

Activity 4

Students will be given a class album and provided with sign-in information, so they can upload their own pictures to an on-line site. Each student will have his/her own album. Then all pictures will be available to all students. Students will be given time to upload their pictures. They will use their name and a number for the title. This will be referenced as a source if other students critique the pictures.

Activity 5

Work on glossary – at least 5 words per day from assigned list.

Activity 6

Write a reflection for a class grade on work done that day. Include responses to the following:

- Describe all the work you accomplished today.
- What naming scheme have you set up for the pictures you are saving so you can find them easily again?
- Use the supplied form to write about ONE of your pictures. (These questions are written in the first lesson.)

Culminating Project

This project will take place after students have examined lots of photos including ones that could ill illustrate the concepts given the students in this project. They will have completed a set of tutorials on taking and editing pictures and completed little assignments to make pictures that illustrate various rules of composition as well as various concepts. This project will take at two or three weeks since our students are on a block schedule and the teachers only see them every other day. The students will be given this project early on, so they can be thinking of it and possibly making pictures to include in it while doing class assignments.

Materials

- Computers
- Photo Editing Software
- Digital Cameras
- Props
- Picture Planning Form
- Nice Net to post reflections

Objectives

- to use rules of composition to make pictures with strong statements
- to use critical analysis to choose best pictures
- to be able to use a on editing tool to enhance pictures
- to write titles, captions and reflections about pictures
- to work in groups to assist each other in making and choosing pictures
- to produce a portfolio of pictures on assigned themes
- to be able to support choices of pictures with reflections

During the course of the project, students will make pictures that illustrate two to six themes. They will work in groups of four and prepare a portfolio of the pictures from all of them that they feel best portray the themes. (Students can chose themes or the teacher can assign them so all themes are covered.) Each student will take and edit pictures illustrating one or more of the themes. Then the group will critique the pictures and pick the pictures from the group to include in the portfolio. The maker of the picture will provide a reflection of why he/she decided to make

the picture. The group will provide a reflection of why they selected each picture as the one that best represented the theme. They will also decide on titles and captions for the pictures that provide more details relating to the theme. The final portfolio can be shown as an album from the photo storage site, or as a Power Point presentation. They will write reflections telling why they picked the pictures for the portfolio.

Possible Themes (we will first have to study the meanings of many of these words)

Courage	Appreciation	Caring	Believing
Education	Healing	Dreaming	Creativity
Humility	Gratitude	Integrity	Freedom
Acceptance	Self-forgiveness	Inspiration	Friendliness
Respect	Generosity	Listening	Forgiveness
Patience	Love	Understanding	Kindness
Dialogue	Unity	Accountability	Uniqueness
Cooperation	Equality	Service	Citizenship
Celebration	Commitment		

During the project, they will be critiquing each other's pictures, writing reflections, writing titles, captions, and little essays, and finally, will be grading each other's portfolios with a rubric. They will judge the pictures on craftsmanship according to the rules of composition, on creativity, on the clearness of the writing, and on how well the picture illustrates the theme. We will also be doing mini lessons to continue to make our visual message stronger as well as to review rules of writing to edit our titles and captions.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works Cited

Andrzejczak, N., G. Trainin, and M. Poldberg. "From Image to Text: Using Images in the Writing Process." 19 October 2005. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 6.12. Mar 2006. <<http://ijea.asu.edu/v6n12/>>.

This is a description of how using art to generate writing increased children's writing skills.

Tannenbaum, Michael. "Multiliteracies as a Bridge between the Curriculum and the Individual: On Teaching Art via the Personal Photo Album." *Journal of Visual Literacy* (Autumn 2005): 25.2:123-144. Communication & Mass Media Complete. Epnnet. M.D. Anderson. 26 Feb 2006.

<<http://search.epnet.com.ezproxy.lib.uh.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&an=18391374>>.

They had students make pictures about their lives and pick the pictures that they felt were most expressive. They then wrote about the pictures.

Yenawine, Philip. "Thoughts on Visual Literacy." 1997. *Visual Understanding in Education. From Handbook of Research on teaching Literacy through the Communicative and Visual Arts*. 14 Mar. 2006. <www.vue.org>.

Supplemental Resources

Abilock, Debbie. "A Seven-Power Lens on 21st-Century Literacy: Instilling Cross-Disciplinary Visual, News Media, and Information_Literacy Skills." *Multimedia Schools* (2003). 20 Mar 2006.

<<http://www.infotoday.com/mmschools>>.

This is mostly about the metaskills needed to be literate in the 21st century but also discusses how to decode pictures and how to research the information to check out if it is true.

"Facillator's Guide." *ArtiFact*. 17 Mar. 2006. <<http://ldt.stanford.edu/~pagemc/ed208/facilitatorsguide.pdf>>.

This gives directions for a curriculum on visual literacy and offers several lessons. Works with history but could easily be modified for other subjects. This is for a contest in photography that will define equality.

Peursson, Rune. "Gearing Communications to the Cognitive Needs of Students: Findings from Visual Literacy Research." *Journal of Visual Literacy*: 24.2:129-154. Communication & Mass Media Complete. Epnet. M.D. Anderson Library. 26 Feb 2006.
<<http://search.epnet.com.ezproxy.lib.uh.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&an=16677711>>.

Riesland, Erin. "Visual Literacy and the Classroom." *New Horizons for Learning* (2005). 14 Mar 2006.
<<http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/literacy/riesland.htm>>.
Discusses visual literacy and how to teach it.

Thibault, Melissa ,and David Walbert. "Reading Photographs." *LEARN* North Carolina April 20, 2006.
<<http://www.learnnc.org/articles/vlphoto0602-1>>.
This has lots of good information to use in lessons.

Teacher Tools

<http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>
Site for finding rubrics and making own rubrics. These will be needed to set guidelines for projects and then grade them.

<http://www.nicenet.org>
Free on-line collaboration tool described in the paper. Students have been extremely responsive to using it. They get their assignments and turn in work and discuss via a bulletin board. Absent students can catch up work from anywhere.

Various Projects That Use Digital Photography

<http://www.adobe.com/education/digkids/lessons/main.html>
Has lots of lessons that would let students use photography for expression while integrating it into other subjects.

http://www.fotofest.org/literacy_curric10.htm
Has lesson ideas for getting children to express who they are with self portraits.

<http://www.usefilm.com/projects.php>
Lots of current pictures in various projects

http://www.mediaawareness.ca/english/resources/educational/teachable_moments/photo_truth.cfm
Interesting Discussion on Digitally Altered photos. Also ideas for student activities. This is a good site to use teach students ways photos can be changed and to make them to think that any photograph could have been altered.

<http://www.indiana.edu/~mathers/collections/photos/reading.html>
This has good ideas that could be applied to other historical photographs. This uses Indians as an example.

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/index.cfm>
A Media Awareness Site with several lessons that might be useful

<http://nuovo.com/southern-images/analyses.html>
Great Resource site – Good for vocabulary and lessons- includes objectives

<http://www.ebookhost.net/tldmc2/ebook.asp>
The Art of Digital Storytelling – has lots of student and adult work. Requires registration

<http://www.techlearning.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=47102021>
Article on the New Literacy. Talks about what students should be able to do. Good for thinking about the higher level skills that must be incorporated.

<http://www.kodak.com/global/en/consumer/education/lessonPlans/indices/photography.shtm>
Lesson Plans from Kodak that includes both photographic activities and how to integrate photography into other subjects.

http://dmoz.org/Kids_and_Teens/Arts/Photography/
Good set of sites to look at for both knowledge and ideas to use with students

Sites of Stored Photographs

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>
Actually part of Library of Congress but organizes pictures by topic

<http://www.borderfilmproject.com/>
This site is of pictures taking by Hispanic immigrants as well as American Minutemen trying to stop them. I think some of them will resonate with some of my students.

<http://www.mocp.org/collections/permanent/>
Pictures by leading photographers since 19th century. Need to know photographer's names to find their pictures.

<http://www.cmp.ucr.edu/>
California Museum of Photography – most comprehensive photographic collection in the west.

<http://photography-museum.com/index.html>
The American Museum of Photography – Includes interesting photographs from the East Meets West exhibit – the story and pictures of how pictures about Japanese life helped us understand their culture.

http://smithsonianimages.si.edu/siphoto/siphoto.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=home
Smithsonian Museum Images

<http://www.guggenheim.org/>
Guggenheim Photo Collection – find pictures with search for photography

<http://www.photomuse.org/>
PhotoMuse.org, the collaborative website of the George Eastman House and International Center of Photography Alliance.

<http://photoswest.org/collect.htm>
Denver Public Library's Photographs of West – in several topic galleries

<http://www.art-support.com/museums.htm#TX>
This is a list of Texas museums that collect photographs with links to them.

Photojournalism Sites

http://www.timelifepictures.com/ms_timepix/source/home/home.aspx?pg=1
<http://www.art-support.com/museums.htm#TX>
Time Life Pictures

<http://www.pulitzer.org/year/2005/breaking-news-photography/works/> –
Pulitzer Prize Winners for 2005

http://www.warchronicle.com/journalists/capa_pics.htm
Photographs by Robert Capa

<http://www.skylighters.org/photos/robertcapa.html>
More Robert Capa pictures

<http://www.worldpressphoto.com/>
Has contest to select best photos from international photojournalism community. So each photograph is very powerful.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/custom/2005/12/16/CU2005121601341.html>
Best of Post Photos- 2005

Sites for Photo Essays

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/president/gallery/photoessay/>
White House pictures.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/photo/world/africa/index.htm>
Washington Post on-line (I found Day in the Life of Africa mesmerizing. They have galleries of photos for each date)

Photo Tutorials/Tips

<http://www.jurgwittwer.com/course.htm#8> Easy Rules for Good Photojournalism
This page offers a few simple rules about taking good photographs.

<http://www.betterphoto.com/exploring/tips.asp>
Betterphoto.com's on-line photo guide on how to take better pictures.
The tips on this Web site will help novice, non-artistic, and/or non-technical picture-takers immediately improve their photography.

<http://www.adobe.com/education/digkids/>
Set of tutorials for learning to take pictures

<http://www.youthlearn.org/learning/activities/multimedia/photo3.asp>

Good discussion of how to take pictures and discussion of using pictures.

Lessons/Lesson Ideas that Use Photography – Both Using Pictures and Making Pictures

<http://www.youthlearn.org/learning/activities/multimedia/medialit.asp>

Good discussion of need for visual literacy. Also some lesson ideas.

http://www.ceismc.gatech.edu/family_learning_nook/title_library/busyt/art_ph.shtml

Has activities and sources for pictures.

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/photo.html>

Good Activities for working with language and writing

<http://www.kodak.com/global/en/consumer/education/lessonPlans/indices/photography.shtml>.

Lesson Plans from Kodak include both photographic activities and how to integrate photography into other subjects.

http://dmoz.org/Kids_and_Teens/Arts/Photography/

Good set of sites to look at for both knowledge and ideas to use with students

<http://www.justthink.org/index.html>

Place for lessons and activities for teaching kids to evaluate media.

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=116

Literacy lesson using a picture. Also links to many sites of stored photographs

<http://nuovo.com/southern-images/analyses.html>

Lesson in Basic Strategies in Reading Photographs. Also includes the vocabulary students need talk about photographs.

<http://my-ecoach.com/online/teacherguide4.php?projectid=275>

A non-violence lesson using photography – many of these same terms are those that describing successful people so good source of descriptive terms.

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/teachable_moments/photo_truth.cfm

Photographic truth in digital photography. This is a Canadian site but the ideas could be developed with local pictures