

FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY: A CURRICULUM GUIDE

This page is an excerpt from *Focus on Photography: A Curriculum Guide*

Written by **Cynthia Way** for the **International Center of Photography**

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FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY: A CURRICULUM GUIDE

PART III



Curriculum Connections

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9 Making Curriculum Connections

OVERVIEW

This chapter discusses how to make connections between photography and other academic disciplines.



Figure 56

From Textbook to Image

The medium of photography is so diverse in genre, style, and application, it has such a broad history, and it is so rich with themes that it is the ideal medium to connect to a range of disciplines—history, social studies, science, math, literature, or languages.

Integrating photography into the school curriculum can supplement the study of academic disciplines by creating visual and experiential pathways for learning. Many students who do not do well in traditional academics succeed in the active art of photography. The idea is to use the immediacy and clarity of photography to make academic topics vivid and relevant to students' lives. From photography's rich imagic store, educators can select historical and contemporary images that connect to the curricular theme. Whether responding to existing images or creating original images, students are engaged in activities that reinforce the curricular topic. By re-creating a historical photograph, for example, students role-play and feel history come alive, seeing similarities and differences between the past and present. At the same time as they learn about history, they develop visual literacy skills by learning about how photographs communicate and mastering photographic techniques (see *Part III, Chapter 10: Photography & History*).

When developing a photography project in connection with the school curriculum, the first question is: How does this academic topic relate to our lives? To these students today? Then, the task is to figure how that might translate into a visual project. The case studies in *Part III* describe several ways that ICP educators have approached the translation from textbook to image. This is only a selection; the options are as varied and endless as the medium itself!

In general, remember that images come from the imagination, so let your imagination play with the curricular topic. What do you see when you think of this book, this time in history, this social issue? What might your students see? What is the broader theme? How might your students relate to these images and the theme? From this personal connection, try to figure out what visual form the students' responses might take. Is this theme best explored through portraiture or documentary work, natural or staged pictures? Work with the techniques, aesthetics, and genres that are familiar to you. Enlist guest artists to share their perspectives and techniques that may not be part of your repertoire. Take inspiration from working artists and other art education programs. Above all, make the connection meaningful to your audience.

Steps for Making a Curriculum Connection

1 ONCE YOU HAVE YOUR PROJECT THEME, CLARIFY YOUR GOALS. EXPLORE INNOVATIVE WAYS TO TEACH PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS AND TO REINFORCE STUDIES IN AN ACADEMIC AREA.

- For example, a social studies teacher wants to make the 1930s more accessible to her high school students, so she decides to explore artwork from that era and historical landmarks in the students' neighborhood. She designs a digital imaging photography project that has three teaching goals: (1) to teach basic photography skills so students can create images of historical places in their neighborhood; (2) to teach analytical skills so students can research the local history through accounts and art work; (3) to teach communication skills in art—writing, photography, and multi-media—so students can use these media to respond to what they learn about the local history. The final project is to create a collage combining the students' images, the historical images and information, written reflections by students, and selected quotes from writers they have read. This project will demonstrate their understanding of local history through their artistic response and will help them relate to the 1930s history and authors that they are studying.

2 IDENTIFY WHAT THE CURRICULUM NEEDS TO COVER. WHAT SKILLS DO STUDENTS NEED IN ORDER TO MEET THE PROJECT'S GOALS?

- In this example, they would need skills in: documentary photography, digital camera handling, digital image alteration using available software, Internet research, looking critically at historical photographs and their own images, reading historical accounts and novels by local writers, writing responses to photographs, and creating collages.

3 PLAN A CURRICULUM. WHAT ACTIVITIES AND TYPES OF INSTRUCTION WILL BUILD THESE SKILLS?

- *Focus* provides some resources to help educators plan activities for this example. To review what to cover in digital imaging, read *Part III, Chapter 16: Photography & Digital Imaging*. For sample curriculum, see the Focus Darkroom Curriculum, adapted for digital imaging, in *Part II, Chapter 7: Documentary Photography Projects*. To plan lessons see *Part IV, Focus Lessons 1-10*. Use **Focus Link 15** to look at and analyze a historical photograph. To generate student writing for the collage, see section 3, Writing About a Historical Image in *Part III, Chapter 14: Photography & Writing*. For inspiration on combining art media, see *Part III, Chapter 15: Photography & Other Art Media*. Add lessons on conducting Internet research and reading historical accounts and literature, with the goal of selecting facts and quotes from this material for the collage.

4 TO MAKE THE PROJECT COHESIVE, EXAMINE THE CURRICULUM FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE: HOW DO THESE SKILLS IN PHOTOGRAPHY RELATE TO THE SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL GOALS?

- This example's project meets New York State social studies standard 1; English language arts standard 2; national educational technology standards 1, 2, and 3; and the national and state visual art standards. See *Part II, Chapter 6: Meeting Educational Goals*.

5 MAKE SURE THE PROJECT IS APPROPRIATE TO THE SCHOOL'S NEEDS AND RESOURCES.

- For example, how much time do you need in the computer lab? Is there someone on staff to help you with any technical glitches? If you are using donated digital cameras that are each different, do you need to make instruction sets for each camera and take extra time to explain the controls to students? Does this project meet the school's learning goals for students in technology, art, and social studies? Can you describe to school leaders how this project is an important way to motivate students to learn about their community history (see the rationale in *Part I, Chapter 1: Why Photographic Education?* and *Part III, Chapter 10: Photography & History*)? Can you articulate why you think this project will engage and benefit this particular group of students? How can this connect to other projects or courses conducted by your colleagues? Can you garner support from others to show the resulting collages, for example, in the computer lab during a parents' open house?

Finding Inspiration

Whether you are working in a team with other faculty, or individually as an art teacher or in another discipline, you can find connections and activities that work within your means. You can view images, discuss images, collect images, create images, exhibit images...

Figure 57



Some examples:

Discipline	Connection
History	Study and re-create a photograph of a historical event.
Social Studies	Document a current example in the community of the topic being studied (e.g., labor, women's issues, civil rights, the environment).
Science	Study optics and the science of light in camera obscura and pinhole photography activities. Develop observation skills by photographing nature.
Mathematics	Practice ratios in photographic techniques, such as lighting, exposure, and mixing chemistry. Create an income and expense sheet for a photographer's business. Create images that illustrate mathematical concepts: numbers, infinity, ratios, quantities, sequences. Create images of geometric shapes found in architecture.
Literature	Create photographs of characters and scenes. Create photographic narratives with a similar theme to a book but make the story contemporary to students' lives.
Language Arts	Discuss and write about photographs to build reading, speaking, and writing skills in any language.
Music	Focus on rhythm and pattern. Create CD covers using photographs of students in group poses.
Theater	Create photographs for background set design as inspiration for monologues or as a way to narrate part of a story in a play.
Painting	Re-create historical artworks by master painters or photographers.
Sculpture/Installation	Mount photographs onto a three-dimensional sculpture or project them as part of an installation.
Computer Technology	Use the Internet to research topics and collect images. Create original digital images and incorporate them into multimedia projects. Create a Web site or online portfolio of student work.

About the Case Studies in *Part III*

The following chapters in *Part III* illustrate ways to teach photography in connection with different disciplines. Based on ICP's experiences, the case studies can offer you inspiration for designing your own project.

Because most of the ICP In-School Partnerships took place in middle schools, the case studies reflect middle school programming and adolescent concerns. A few case studies include high schools (see chapters 14, 15, and 17). *Chapter 14: Photography & Writing* also contains examples from an elementary school partnership. If the topic of a chapter interests you, but the case study is about a program at a different level, review *Part II's* discussion on adapting curriculum to the audience (see chapters 4 and 5).

Each chapter in *Part III* contains introductory comments on the principles for making the curriculum connection that you can incorporate into your teaching practice, even if the case study is about a different level. The case studies offer a glimpse into the many ways that you can use photography in the curriculum as well as how you can apply the *Focus* lessons plans and activities.

EDUCATORS’ QUOTES



“ To be a good photographer, you have to be a well-rounded person; you have to know history, social studies, everything; you have to know a little bit of each subject, because photography touches on all of it. In terms of photography and science, I think of cyanotypes, sun prints, camera obscura, pinhole, exposure, and the photocell reflecting light. Photography and math: shutter speed, aperture, and exposure—what they do, how they show things. Social studies: journals on different cultures, photo essays. I like to put small groups together to photograph different cultural areas or events. It’s almost like traveling to a different country. Usually when kids go out and explore, I have them focus on a culture other than their own, something they’re interested in and something that’s different from what they’re used to. They need to discover things, they need to see what’s different, and also what’s similar.”

Curtis Willocks, Photographer/ICP Instructor

“ Many of our fifth-grade students transferred what they learned about photography to other areas of the curriculum. On walks outdoors they talked about photo opportunities because of light, and they applied their photography knowledge to computer digital work.”

Kate Hogan, Faculty, The Earth School

“ What better way to enhance the school’s curriculum than to add the experiences that come along with learning photography, giving our students yet another tool to express their ideas and feelings.”

Linda Hill, Director, Academy for Community Education and Service

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10

Photography and History

OVERVIEW

This chapter explores ways to connect photography and history and presents a case study with two curricula at the middle school level.

Figure 58



Portal to the Past

One way to help students relate to a topic in history or an event that happened 50 or 100 or 1000 years before they were born is to use art as a portal to the past. Art-making and the discussion of art are powerful ways to understand another time and place.

Looking at a photograph of the Second World War can place students in the 1940s with vivid, sensory information. Viewing and discussing a portrait of a historical figure such as Abraham Lincoln helps make history personal and real. When students re-create a historical photograph, posing as characters and re-enacting the event, they connect emotionally to history. In photographing the scene, students also develop visual thinking skills as they consider what details to include in the setting and choose symbols to convey important ideas.

Another engaging activity is taking a historical walking tour of the neighborhood, first viewing old photographs of the site and then creating new photographs there. Documenting traces of history and change during such a tour helps students compare the past and the present. It also expands their perspective of a familiar neighborhood.

Another topic to consider is media itself—how photographs are used to record both world history and personal memories and how media plays a role in telling the story of history.

This chapter presents a case study from an ICP In-School partnership in which students learned how photography can communicate about the past and present. As with all ICP In-School Partnerships, the photography project covered the history, techniques, aesthetics, and practice of photography, meeting once a week in collaboration with school faculty. Planning took place among ICP staff, the school director, and collaborating faculty—the language arts teacher and the art teacher. The partners decided to use photography in the language arts and art classes as a way to enhance their curriculum and also link to what the eighth grade was covering in history. With such an ambitious agenda, constant communication among staff helped create the curriculum connections. The goal was to use photography to help students see a connection between their lives and history.

The curriculum connection was implemented in two ways:

- activities, assignments, and even the selection of the guest artists were geared toward encouraging personal responses to historical topics
- students developed the technical and aesthetic skills to create both documentary and studio pictures, ultimately resulting in historical fictions

This case study includes two curricula, *Records of War* and *Voices for Freedom*, which explored both traditional and nontraditional ways of seeing history through photography.

CASE STUDY

SEEING HISTORY THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

Figure 59: Robert Capa, *U.S. Troops Landing on D-Day, Omaha Beach, Normandy Coast, June 6, 1944*



Seeing History Through Photography: Part 1

Records of War

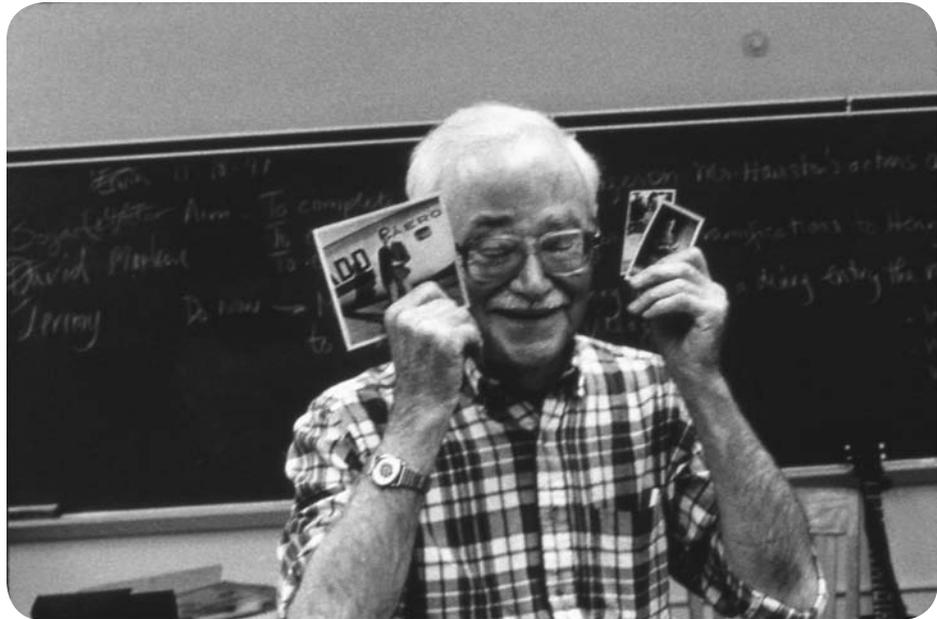
1998-1999

In connection with the eighth-grade's studies on the Second World War, this 10-session project incorporated photography and writing assignments, slide presentations on historical and contemporary war photography, and guest artist visits.

To learn how documentary photographs communicate about world events, students viewed historical photographs by such renowned war photographers as Robert Capa, whose photographs of D-Day appeared in *Life*. (See Figure 59.) Students also viewed current ICP exhibitions by contemporary documentary photographers to discuss aesthetic possibilities.

To personalize history, a group of storytellers from Elders Share the Arts visited the class to talk about authentic experiences of the war. Director Susan Perlstein shared her father's journal of drawings, writings, and his letters home to her from the war. Second World War veteran Roy Godes told stories and sang songs from the war era. He showed his album of snapshots through which he remembers these events.

Figure 60



Following an introduction to camera handling, students learned to create images in black-and-white and color. Using 35mm manual cameras, students practiced techniques during field trips to neighborhood locations. For example, students created photographs of war ships during a field trip to the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum in Midtown Manhattan.

ICP Community Record Program at the Academy for Community Education and Service (ACES) 1998-1999

The Academy of Community Education and Service (ACES), located in East Harlem, New York, was a middle school with an emphasis on communication arts and community service.

Audience: 30 eighth-grade students

Collaborating staff: ICP Coordinator of Community Programs Cynthia Way; ICP Instructor Nancy Wechter; ICP Teaching Assistant Jeannette Rodriguez; Director of ACES Linda Hill; ACES Language Arts Teacher Elise Merraw; and ACES Art Teacher Dave Mosher.

Funding for this program was provided by the Rudin Family Foundation Inc. and the Surdna Foundation.

The resulting curriculum met state standards in art, English language arts, and social studies.

In discussions of their work, students applied the vocabulary of photography, such as light, shadow, blur, focus, point of view, foreground, and background. They critiqued 4" x 6" color prints, viewed color slide shows, edited black-and-white contact sheets, and discussed the final enlargements from negatives. In this way, students learned how photographs can be processed using a variety of materials even though this was not a darkroom course.

For the final project, the classroom was transformed into a studio to re-enact a historical scene. Students designed the set based on the book *The Last Mission* by Harry Mazer, which they had read in class. Working with the art teacher Dave Mosher, they painted a backdrop of an old Second World War plane's cockpit. Guest artist Matthew Septimus helped lead a studio shoot in which students played the roles of soldiers and fighter pilots. Working in small groups of six to eight students at a time, students posed in costumes. Some played Rosie the Riveter in overalls and a bandana, and some draped themselves in the American flag for portraits. To involve those groups waiting for the studio activity, ICP Instructor Nancy Wechter conducted a tabletop lighting demonstration using toy soldiers and the American flag.

Figure 61



In the next session, the students edited their contact sheets, choosing images that best illustrated the historical scene. They critiqued the final prints, which were developed with a sepia tone to recall the look of the past. Class discussions centered on imagery and technique, as well as the role of photography in recording both personal and world history. This final project drew together the students' photography skills, their knowledge of language arts and history, and their understanding of topics that they had studied in class.

Figure 62



Figure 63



CASE STUDY CURRICULUM: YEAR 1

Records of War

1998-1999

This curriculum outlines assignments and activities for the class sessions described in the case study. Many sessions are based on lesson plans or activities that correspond to the **Focus Links** in *Part IV*. To adapt this project to your setting, review the related **Focus Links** to find general lessons plans and exercises that you can tailor to your students' needs.

Related Focus Links:

Case Study Curriculum

See *Part IV*.

Focus Link 1

SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY

- Present slides by historical and contemporary photographers of world conflicts: Gordon Parks, Robert Capa, and James Nachtwey
- Discuss composition and meaning
- Hands-on exercise: Compose portraits of each other using Polaroid cameras

Focus Link 2

SESSION 2 CAMERA AS A TOOL

- Instruct camera handling using the 35mm camera
- Homework: Using the empty slide frame, view your home and neighborhood settings to practice framing

Focus Link 3

SESSION 3 PRACTICING TECHNIQUE

- Photograph in Central Park to practice camera handling
- Assignments:
Create at least one close-up portrait of someone you know
Approach and photograph someone you don't know
- Process 4" x 6" color prints at lab

Focus Link 3

SESSION 4 CREATING IMAGES

- Photograph the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum in Manhattan
- Assignment: Create photographs to document what you see as "historical"
- Process black-and-white contact sheets at lab

Focus Link 8

Focus Link 43

SESSION 5 LIGHTING TECHNIQUES

- Review color prints to discuss what makes a “good” picture
- Introduce the principles of focus, blur, movement, and context
- Demonstrate lighting effects using hot lights
- Assignment: Create portraits in class using artificial and natural light

Focus Link 6

SESSION 6 EDITING PHOTOGRAPHS

- Review contact sheets from the previous two classes to address how students are handling techniques and approaching picture-making
- View and discuss slides of Second World War photographs, including the personal snapshots
- Assignment: Using a photograph, write about what someone from that scene would remember about the war

Focus Link 9

SESSION 7 GUEST ARTIST VISIT

- Conduct story-telling activity with Elders Share the Arts to hear stories from war
- Discuss the historical set (the backdrops, props, and costumes) needed for the next class

SESSION 8 PHOTO/THEATER WITH GUEST ARTIST

MATTHEW SEPTIMUS

- Transform the classroom into theater, moving aside desks and chairs, hanging a backdrop, setting up studio lights
- Demonstrate use of lights and large-format camera
- Assign students roles as photographer, assistant, lighting technician, stylist, and prop manager
- Create portraits of historical characters
- Demonstrate lighting on tabletop using toy soldiers
- Tour at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum with role-playing activities
- Document trip

Focus Link 7 _____

SESSION 9 GALLERY VISIT

- View and discuss the documentary approach of photographers in the ICP exhibitions Walker Evans: Simple Secrets and Intimate City: Photographs by Thomas Roma

Focus Link 10 _____

SESSION 10 EDITING THE FINAL PROJECT

Focus Link 34 _____

- Review contact sheets and final prints
- Assignment: Write a reflection on your work
- Evaluate class

Seeing History Through Photography: Part 2

Voices for Freedom

1998-1999

Figure 64



In the spring, the eighth-grade curriculum addressed the American Civil Rights Movement. The 10-session ICP project investigated the role that photography played in the media during the struggle for freedom. At the same time, students addressed ideas of freedom in America today through their personal responses and images.

Slide lectures included the work of important documentary photographers and provided a visual history of the events and leaders of the movement. Guests from Elders Share the Arts added a personal note to the class. Carrie Raiford, a storytelling artist, spoke of her experiences in the South in the 1960s. Actress Dawn Formeby conducted warm-up exercises and discussions relating to issues of race and culture.

For the final project, guest artist Matthew Septimus assisted ICP Instructor Nancy Wechter in conducting a studio shoot in which students re-enacted iconic photographs of protests from the movement. (See Figures 64 and 66.) To prepare, Art Teacher Dave Mosher helped students draw and write protest signs. Addressing racial segregation, the students' protest pictures were set in the school environment, creating an interesting combination of past and present. Additionally, instructors discussed the importance of lighting, pose, gesture, and background in giving voice to a message through photography. Students learned how to communicate in combinations of words and images.

On the last class, to capture the spirit of a protest march, students walked across the Brooklyn Bridge all the way to City Hall, the site of many protests and marches, while carrying disposable cameras to document their trek.

Figure 65



Figure 66



CASE STUDY CURRICULUM: YEAR 2

Voices for Freedom

1998-1999

This curriculum outlines assignments and activities for the class sessions described in the case study. Many sessions are based on lesson plans or activities that correspond to the **Focus Links** in *Part IV*. To adapt this project to your setting, review the related **Focus Links** to find general lessons plans and exercises that you can tailor to your students' needs.

Related Focus Links:

See *Part IV*.

Sample Curriculum Sequence

Focus Link 1

SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY

- Present slides by a range of documentary photographers such as Roy deCarava, Aaron Siskind, Corrine Simpson, and Robert Frank
- Discuss composition, content, and context
- Hands-on exercise: Compose portraits of each other using Polaroid cameras

Focus Link 2

SESSION 2 CAMERA AS A TOOL

- Instruct camera handling using the 35mm camera
- Homework: Using the empty slide frame, view your home and neighborhood settings to practice framing

Focus Link 8

SESSION 3 LIGHTING TECHNIQUES

- Demonstrate lighting techniques
- Create portraits in class using artificial and natural light
- Process black-and-white contact sheets at lab

Focus Link 5

SESSION 4 CREATING IMAGES

- Practice camera handling in the Central Park Conservatory Garden
- Assignments:
 - Go beyond eye level and shoot from other points of view
 - Create at least one close-up portrait of someone you know
 - Approach and photograph someone you don't know
- Process 4" x 6" color prints at lab

Focus Link 4

SESSION 5 DISCUSSING IMAGES

- Present slides by Charles Moore and others from the struggle for civil rights in America during the 1950s and 1960s
- Discuss the power of photography to bear witness and help change society
- Review photographs from first shoot
- Homework: Cut out images from magazines that address civil rights

Focus Link 9

SESSION 6 GUEST ARTIST VISIT

- Conduct storytelling activity with Elders Share the Arts
- Introduce the project of making protest signs
- Discuss what has changed in society and what still needs to change in terms of civil rights

Focus Link 3

SESSION 7 CREATING IMAGES

- Practice camera handling and conceptual skills in the neighborhood
- Assignment: Photograph things that need to be changed and things that show progress
- Discuss the historical set needed for the next class
- Homework: Work on protest signs during the week

SESSION 8 PHOTO/THEATER WITH GUEST ARTIST

MATTHEW SEPTIMUS

- Transform the classroom into theater, moving aside desks and chairs, hanging a backdrop, setting up studio lights
- Demonstrate use of lights and large-format camera
- Assign students roles as photographer, assistant, lighting technician, stylist, and prop manager
- Re-enact famous images from the Civil Rights Movement

SESSION 9 ASSEMBLING THE FINAL PROJECT

- Review contact sheets and final prints
- Assignment: Write about the question, What are civil rights?
- Prepare for final class trip

Focus Link 10

SESSION 10 FINAL CLASS “MARCH”

- Walk across the Brooklyn Bridge from Brooklyn to City Hall in Manhattan and create images with disposable cameras
- Evaluate class

EDUCATORS’ QUOTES



“
The day of the Second World War studio photo shoot, the students

put up their wonderful hand-painted backdrop of the cockpit of a Second World War fighter plane. We convinced a few of the girls to put on overalls and bandanas and play the part of Rosie the Riveter. While we were scrounging around for other props to use, a teacher passed by with an American flag that had just been taken down from a bulletin board in the hallway. Two boys wrapped themselves up in the flag, and a photograph was born.”

Nancy Wechter, Photographer/ICP Instructor

“
Sharing personal stories had a tremendous impact in both projects. Elders Share the Arts came to visit the class and share memories of Second World War in oral stories, pictures, and albums. Roy Godes, a veteran, brought his guitar and sang songs from the war. He also shared some of his photographs from the war. Susan Perlstein showed a scrapbook made by her father when he was serving as a soldier in Second World War. In it were drawings and letters written to her (she was two years old at the time). I also shared photographs from my father’s Second World War album from the Philippines and Korea. In the second semester, Elders Share the Arts visited again. Actress Carrie Richards told spellbinding tales of her firsthand experiences as a young woman in the segregated South.”

Nancy Wechter, Photographer/ICP Instructor

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11

Photography and Social Studies

OVERVIEW

This chapter presents case studies on a curriculum connection between photography and social studies developed over two years at a middle school.

Figure 67: Lewis Hine, *Immigration in the 1900s*



Picturing the World

Every day we use images to picture the world around us. Whether in an archive, a family album, or a magazine, images present and preserve a sense of who we are, as individuals and as a culture, in our daily life and in our most important moments. On a broad scale, photography communicates our impressions of society and our responses to the issues that concern us. By picturing the world, photography projects can intersect with social studies—the study of how our society has been developed, organized, and governed.

In this chapter’s case study, portraiture was the catalyst connecting photography to the social studies topic of immigration. In the first year, the ICP project focused on empathizing with others by creating portraits of people in the school and neighborhood. In the second year, the project turned the investigation of immigration inward to self, family, and identity. The hallmark was the creation of a photo/theater, in which students took turns posing as characters from around the world. Students learned to picture the world from the point of view of immigrants.

To develop the curriculum connection, the first question was: How does the academic topic of immigration relate to our lives today? To these students? In this case, many students could relate to being a newcomer, from being a new student in school to moving into a new neighborhood; in fact some of the students were new American citizens. Then, ICP educators considered how that investigation might translate into a visual project. By discussing and writing about historical photographs, students could visualize the past and better understand the history of immigration. By learning the art of portraiture, students investigated their own heritage and played the roles of immigrants from around the world. Creating picture stories and immigrant scrapbooks of fictional characters provided an imaginative pathway to relate to social studies.

To clarify the curriculum connection, ICP educators broadened the project theme to *Immigration: Who Are We and Where Do We Come From?* The curriculum connection codified when students were reflecting on how images communicate about important issues in immigration. This reflection occurred in three ways:

- 1 Creating and critiquing their images of invented characters
- 2 Creating journals with images and text
- 3 Writing from historical pictures

CASE STUDY

IMMIGRATION:

Who Are We and Where Do We Come From?



Figure 68

ICP Community Record Program at the Adolph S. Ochs School 1999-2000 and 2000-2001

The Adolph S. Ochs School (PS111), located in midtown Manhattan, serves children in grades K– 8.

Audience: 90 eighth-grade students, three separate classes

Collaborating staff: in 1999-2000, ICP Coordinator of Community Programs Cynthia Way; ICP Instructor Nancy Wechter; ICP Teaching Assistants Lou Dembrow and Karen Lindsay; OCHS Faculty George Morgan and Caroline Garrett; and in 2000-2001, ICP Coordinator of Community Programs Cynthia Way; ICP Instructor Nancy Wechter; ICP Teaching Associate Karen Lindsay; Teaching Assistant Jeannette Rodriguez; OCHS Faculty George Morgan and Kelly Agnew.

Funding for this program was provided by the New York Times Company Foundation Inc. and the Surdna Foundation.

The resulting curriculum met national and state standards in the visual arts, as well as state standards in social studies.

Year 1

This 20-session photography project used the photographic experience to help eighth-grade students picture the social effects of immigration. The theme was Immigration: Who Are We and Where Do We Come From?

Following camera handling instruction, students were ready for a field trip to Ellis Island, a historic site where immigrants first came to America. The assignment was to pretend they had the “fresh eyes” of immigrants in 1900 and record their impressions of arrival to America. Another field trip to the Lower East Side Tenement Museum showed how immigrants lived in the early 1900s. Students toured displays of tenement dwellings and participated in role-playing activities.

In class, they used these experiences and historical photographs as inspiration for writing exercises. They imagined that they were characters struggling to make a life for themselves “back in the day.” The photograph gave them an immediate sense of “being there,” rich with details, character, story, and feeling. Then, students created immigrants’ scrapbooks, in which they told the stories of their characters’ lives, using diary entries, documents, photographs, and drawings.

To broaden their sense of aesthetics, the class viewed documentary photography exhibitions at ICP, El Museo del Barrio, and The Museum of the City of New York. Guest photographers Bruce Davidson, Ellen Binder, and Corky Lee each visited the class and showed their contemporary approaches to photographing people from various cultures. During photographic excursions in the neighborhood, students photographed and interviewed the great variety of people in the neighborhood, from school staff and students to those working nearby in popular ethnic restaurants.

The finale was the transformation of the classroom into a photo/theater, in which students played roles of immigrants from countries they had studied. To introduce the idea of acting, Instructor Nancy Wechter and Teaching Assistant Lou Dembrow donned plaid shawls, bonnets, and faded dresses. They entered the classroom lugging an old suitcase and a Yiddish newspaper and asked, “Where we do we go from here, now that we are in America?” Then the class planned what they would wear and do in the photo/theater next session.

The classroom was transformed into a studio when guest artist Matthew Septimus set up a simple cloth backdrop and studio lights to create the photo/theater. Wearing costumes and using props, students posed as immigrants from various places around the world. By both performing roles and creating pictures, students actively drew together their knowledge of photography and immigration, as well as their empathy for the struggle of any stranger coming to a new place.

In a final slide presentation at graduation, the entire school audience viewed the class’s images showing people in the neighborhood, school staff, other students, and classmates dressed up as people from around the world. All of this created a visual answer to the question: Who are we and where do we come from?

Figure 69



Figure 70



Figure 71



Figure 72



Year 2

Pleased with the success of the immigration/photography curriculum, the partners continued the project the following year with new students. Instructors followed the same curriculum with a few exceptions. Instead of creating single images and portraits, the class focused on pictures stories to extend their interpretations of history and to build visual thinking and writing skills.

Rather than photographing people at school and in the neighborhood, the class investigated self-portraits, family portraits, and personal heritage. This more personal focus on family heritage was inspired in part by the desire to link to current ICP exhibitions on the family album. At ICP, guest artist Lorie Novak spoke to students about *Collected Visions*, her large-scale digital installation of a family album. Students were even able to work with her on scanning their family pictures for possible inclusion in her traveling exhibition.

Other guest artists and museum visits broadened students' knowledge of aesthetics and the project theme. Inspired by guest artist Corky Lee's documentation of immigrants in Chinatown, students practiced their photography skills in the neighborhood. They learned to photograph their families and each other in natural lighting situations. In a hands-on shoot with guest artist Harvey Stein, students were introduced to elements of studio lighting that they would use in their final project. In

Figure 73



Figure 74



preparation for the finale, the class viewed an exhibition of photographs on New York childhood at the Museum of the City of New York.

Creating visual narratives is a complex project that instructors broke down into several steps. (See *Picture Stories* in *Chapter 14: Photography & Writing*.) The goal was to tell the story of a day in the life of an immigrant character. The class studied comics to simplify the combination of photography and writing. This also made the narrative sequences easier for students to understand and accomplish. Using Polaroid materials, students created images that focused on action sequences (befores and afters). They added text to describe cues such as setting and dialogue as in a comic. Then, in additional lessons developed by school faculty George Morgan and Kelly Agnew, they created immigration scrapbooks and did research projects that amplified their photographic explorations.

For the final project, students created portraits and picture stories in the dance studio. Guest artist Phyllis Galembo showed her portraits of people from around the world and helped lead the final portrait workshop with students posing in costumes. ICP educators Nancy Wechter and Karen Lindsay conducted the final series of photography shoots for the picture stories. Students designed a set, posed in costumes, and enacted scenes. When students received the final prints, they sequenced the images and added text to tell the stories of their invented character.

Figure 75



Figure 76



Figure 77



Figure 78



In both years, the photography project created an imaginative pathway to learn about social studies. Focusing on portraiture helped students see relationships between academics and their lives, past and present, themselves and others. In this way, the project expanded the students' ability to see and learn from other people.

CASE STUDY CURRICULUM: YEAR 1

Immigration: Who Are We and Where Do We Come From?

1999-2000

This curriculum outlines assignments and activities for the class sessions described in the case study. Many sessions are based on lesson plans or activities that correspond to the **Focus Links** in *Part IV*. To adapt this project to your setting, review the related **Focus Links** to find general lessons plans and exercises that you can tailor to your students' needs.

Related Focus Links:

Case Study Curriculum

See *Part IV*.

Focus Link 1

SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY

- Discuss the theme of immigration (See Educational Material in this chapter.)
- Conduct Polaroid exercise on point of view and portraiture

Focus Link 2

SESSION 2 CAMERA AS A TOOL

- Instruct camera handling using 35mm manual cameras
- Discuss taking photographs versus making photographs

Focus Link 3

SESSION 3 PRACTICING TECHNIQUE

- Prepare for first shoot
- Assignment: Practice point of view in school playground
- Process 4" x 6" color prints at lab

Focus Link 4

SESSION 4 DISCUSSING IMAGES

Focus Link 43

- Discuss editing and technique: What makes a "good" picture?

Focus Link 3

SESSION 5 CREATING IMAGES

- Document city street life in Times Square
- Assignments:
 - Imagine you are a newly arrived immigrant and take pictures of New York to send home
 - Create portraits of a variety of people
- Process contact sheets of black-and-white film at lab

Focus Link 6 _____

SESSION 6 EDITING IMAGES

- Edit contact sheets
- Discuss content and graphics
- Prepare interview questions for next session (See Educational Material in this chapter.)

Focus Link 43 _____

Focus Link 5 _____

SESSION 7 CREATING IMAGES

- Create portraits of third-grade students at PS111
- Conduct interviews of students
- Process: 5" x 7" black-and-white prints at lab

Focus Link 4 _____

SESSION 8 DISCUSSING IMAGES

- Write up interviews
- Discuss 5" x 7" portraits
- Review technique

Focus Link 6 _____

SESSION 9 DISCUSSING IMAGES

- Present slides on Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis immigration work
- Assignment: Writing exercise using Xeroxes of historical photograph
 - Write from the point of view of someone in the picture
 - Write from the point of view of the photographer

Focus Link 16 _____

Focus Link 7 _____

SESSION 10 GALLERY VISIT

- Tour at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum with role-playing activities
- Document trip

SESSION 11 CREATING IMMIGRATION SCRAPBOOKS

- Select images and adding to scrapbook
- Draw and write about invented characters

Focus Link 9 _____

SESSION 12 GUEST ARTIST VISIT

- Discuss presentation by guest artist Ellen Binder of her documentary photographs from around the world
- Prepare for street shoot next class (See Educational Material in this chapter.)

Focus Link 3

SESSION 13 CREATING IMAGES

- Assignment: Photograph people working in the range of ethnic restaurants on 50th Street
- Process color slide film at lab

Focus Link 9

SESSION 14 GUEST ARTIST VISIT

- View slide and music presentation of Chinese immigrants in New York by guest artist Corky Lee
- Discuss what an immigrant is

Focus Link 4

SESSION 15 DISCUSSING IMAGES

- View and discuss color slides
- Assignment: Write diary entries based on pictures

Focus Link 8

SESSION 16 LIGHTING TECHNIQUES

- Demonstrate studio lighting using still life objects (See Figure 74.)
- Prepare for photo/theater and role playing

**SESSION 17 PHOTO/THEATER WITH GUEST ARTIST
MATTHEW SEPTIMUS**

- Set up classroom as photo/theater, moving desks and chairs, hanging a backdrop
- Assign students roles as photographer, assistant, lighting technician, stylist, and set/prop manager
- Demonstrate large-format camera use
- Work in revolving groups to create images, coaching students in techniques and in portraying their characters

**SESSION 18 PHOTO/THEATER WITH GUEST ARTIST
MATTHEW SEPTIMUS**

- Conduct second session to build stories

Focus Link 7

SESSION 19 GALLERY VISIT

- Tour exhibition of photographs by Bruce Davidson
- Interview Bruce Davidson about his work

Focus Link 10

SESSION 20 EDITING THE FINAL PROJECT

- Edit to create slide show

CASE STUDY CURRICULUM: YEAR 2

Immigration: Who Are We and Where Do We Come From?

2000–2001

This curriculum outlines assignments and activities for the class sessions described in the case study. Many sessions are based on lesson plans or activities that correspond to the **Focus Links** in *Part IV*. To adapt this project to your setting, review the related **Focus Links** to find general lessons plans and exercises that you can tailor to your students' needs.

Related Focus Links:

Case Study Curriculum

See *Part IV*.

Focus Link 1

SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY

- Discuss the theme of immigration (See Educational Material in this chapter.)
- Conduct Polaroid exercise on point of view and portraiture

Focus Link 2

SESSION 2 CAMERA AS A TOOL

- Instruct camera handling using 35mm manual cameras
- Discuss taking photographs versus making photographs

Focus Link 3

SESSION 3 PRACTICING TECHNIQUE

- Prepare for first shoot
- Assignment: Practice point of view in school playground
- Process 4" x 6" color prints at lab

Focus Link 4

SESSION 4 DISCUSSING IMAGES

Focus Link 43

- Discuss editing and technique: What makes a good picture?
- Hand out journals for writing about pictures

Focus Link 3

SESSION 5 CREATING IMAGES

- Document street life in Times Square
- Assignments:
 - Imagine you are a newly arrived immigrant and take pictures of New York to send home
 - Create portraits of a variety of people
- Process contact sheets of black-and-white film at lab

Focus Link 8

SESSION 6 LIGHTING TECHNIQUES

- Discuss handout on lighting
- Demonstrate lighting using hot lights to create still lifes
- Create still life of what someone would take with them if they left home using objects that students and instructors brought to class

Focus Link 7

SESSION 7 GALLERY VISIT

- View ICP exhibition on historical photo albums, portraits from the ICP Collections, and the installation Collected Visions, a large-scale, digital family album by Lorie Novak
- Participate in gallery talk with guest artist Lorie Novak and in activity scanning family pictures

Focus Link 9

SESSION 8 GUEST ARTIST VISIT

- View presentation by photographer Harvey Stein on his portraiture work
- Conduct a portraiture shoot with strobes in the dance studio
- Process: Polaroid PN film, providing a positive and negative (for use in upcoming activity)

Focus Link 6

SESSION 9 EDITING IMAGES

- Provide feedback on portraits and stories
- Prepare questions for family interviews (See Educational Material in this chapter.)
- Assignment:
 - Take family pictures with disposable cameras
 - Write family stories over the holiday break

Focus Link 6

SESSION 10 DISCUSSING IMAGES

- Present slides on Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis immigration work

Focus Link 16

- Assignment: Writing exercise using Xeroxes of historical photographs
 - Write from the point of view of someone in the picture
 - Write from the point of view of the photographer and his project goals

Focus Link 29

SESSION 11 PRACTICING TECHNIQUE

- Conduct sun print activity using large-scale negatives from previous guest artist's visit to give students a sense of the photographic process

Focus Link 9

SESSION 12 GUEST ARTIST VISIT

- View slide and music presentation of Chinese immigrants in New York by guest artist Corky Lee
- Discuss what an immigrant is

Focus Link 7

SESSION 13 GALLERY VISIT

- Tour the Lower East Side Tenement Museum with role-playing activities

SESSION 14 PICTURE STORIES

- Introduce how pictures tell stories (See Pictures Stories in *Chapter 14: Photography & Writing* and Figures 75-78.)
- View a slide by Lewis Hine and discuss the story the picture tells through character, situation, gesture, and expression
- Edit family snapshots to find examples of pictures showing context, action, and close-up expression
- Conduct Polaroid activity: Working in small teams, photograph context, actions, and expression
- Create a picture story using the Polaroids
- Assignment: Interview family members about heritage
Prepare for field trip (See Educational Material in this chapter.)

Focus Link 3

SESSION 15 CREATING IMAGES

- Assignment: Focus on setting. Create photographs of interesting places where the characters might travel. Show evidence of historical New York.
- Homework: Tape favorite comic into journal
- Ongoing project: Continue creating immigration characters by making a scrapbook of items the character might have (tickets, diary entries)

SESSION 16 PICTURE STORIES

- Discuss visual narratives/comics
- Arrange sequences in journal using cut outs from contact sheets and Polaroids
- Add text: Dialogue, setting, and time cues, as in comics
- Create new Polaroids as needed to fill in the story
- Work in small groups to create storyboards of the narrative sequences for the next photo shoot
- Ongoing project: Continue creating immigration scrapbook

SESSION 17 PHOTO/THEATER WITH GUEST ARTIST PHYLLIS GALEMBO

- Set up classroom as photo/theater, moving desks and chairs, hanging a backdrop
- Assign students roles as photographer, assistant, lighting technician, stylist, and set/prop manager
- Demonstrate large-format camera use
- Work in revolving groups to create images, coaching students in techniques and in portraying their characters
- Create portraits, posing with costumes and props
- Homework: Using one portrait, write about what the character is thinking

SESSION 18 PHOTO/THEATER

- Build an action sequence and narrative
- Homework: Based on pictures, write about a day in the life of the character

Focus Link 7

SESSION 19 GALLERY VISIT

- Visit ICP exhibition American Odyssey by Mary Ellen Mark and Museum of the City of New York exhibition Dressing for a New York Childhood
- Document the field trip and photograph in Central Park
- Homework: Write about the character's journey to America

Focus Link 10

SESSION 20 ASSEMBLING THE FINAL PROJECT

- Mount visual narratives and stories on poster board

STUDY QUESTIONS



IMMIGRATION

by Nancy Wechter

WHAT IS AN IMMIGRANT?

An immigrant is someone who came from another country.

EXERCISE FOR INTRODUCTION TO CLASS THEME

Look in newspaper articles, family photographs, magazine articles, and on the Internet for pictures that deal with immigrants and immigration.

STUDY QUESTIONS: IMMIGRATION

- What are some reasons for people immigrating?
- What would it be like to come from another country? To leave your old country?
- What do you think the voyage here would be like? Imagine you are on a voyage and describe it. Did you take a ship? An airplane?

EXERCISE IN PREPARATION FOR FIELD TRIP

Write a story as if you were an immigrant coming to this neighborhood in New York City for the first time.

- Where did you come from?
- What do you see?
- What is it like for you?

EXERCISE IN PREPARATION FOR STREET SHOOT

Write a letter to your family in the Old Country describing New York City now.

- How would you describe what it is like here?
- How would you take pictures to show what it is like?

EXERCISE IN PREPARATION FOR LIGHTING DEMO/STILL LIFE SHOOT

- What would you bring with you from your old country to your new one?
- List all the items you might pack. How would you take pictures of these items in a still life to show what your life was like and what is important to you?

EXERCISE IN PREPARATION FOR PORTRAITS AND INTERVIEWS

Interview someone you know who came here from another place

- Create a set of questions to ask them:
 - What was it like where you came from?
 - Why did you leave?
 - What is like for you here?

INTERVIEWING PROJECT

HERITAGE

by Nancy Wechter

SAMPLE INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

- Are you from New York City? Were you born here? If not, where were you born?
- Do you live in this neighborhood? If not, where do you live?
- How long have you lived in your current neighborhood?
- What different heritages and cultures are represented in your neighborhood?
- What is your heritage? Where is your family from? Your parents? Your grandparents?
- What does your family do? If some of them live or lived in another country, what did they do there?
- Why did your family come here? What was it like for them when they first arrived? What is it like now? How do they feel about it?

STEPS

- Create a set of specific questions you have about your heritage.
- Interview your family members. Either record what they say or take notes.
- Look for visual material that describes your heritage—such as family photographs, newspaper clippings, images from magazines, papers, and symbolic colors or objects.
- Collect or create these images and use them in your journal.

EDUCATORS’ QUOTES



“

How do we help students to see photographically? It’s not just about looking but seeing. It’s not just about hearing but listening. Through the doing of it—making photographs—comes the feeling for it, the empathy.

This empathy came across in the street portrait photography project at the Adolph S. Ochs School. The assignment was to interview and photograph people in the streets of the school neighborhood, known as Hell’s Kitchen. Stopping strangers can be intimidating, but the students were enthusiastic, and people responded warmly. Students introduced themselves and asked, “Where are you from?” Some people were only too happy to talk about themselves while others shyly answered the question. Students recorded each person’s verbal response on a tape recorder. Then, students took their portrait, paying attention to the background, light, and distance from their subject.

As a result, students learned about the many cultural heritages in their neighborhood and heard memories of places left behind. Photography gave the students and people in the neighborhood the opportunity to communicate with one another in a respectful way.”

Lou Dembrow, Photographer/ICP Teaching Assistant

“

In this project on immigration, a lot of my teaching ideas coalesced. This project benefited from a good team, great support from ICP staff and the school, terrific classroom teachers, a juicy theme, and that intangible chemistry of a lively group of students.

*As students chose characters to portray, they blithely crossed decades, oceans, and barriers of race and gender. It was of no concern that the Irish worker was represented by an African American. Latino boys posed reading *The Jewish Daily Forward in Yiddish*, girls dressed as boys, and boys dressed as women. Three boys dressed in long, mysterious Middle Eastern robes and posed holding baby dolls. A group of girls created a dramatic scenario about an Italian mother and her daughters with weepy, sentimental poses that had everyone laughing and cheering (despite the 90-degree heat of the day). The atmosphere of the sessions was joyous.*

A big issue for students in junior high school is identity and ownership of photographs. Pictures of themselves and their friends are very important to adolescents. In editing sessions, teenagers often pick pictures that are OF them rather than BY them to claim with pride. We resolved the conflict between ‘identity’ pictures and those that responded to assignment topics by having specifically focused editing sessions. Students were taught the difference between pictures that emphasized content and those that were about design elements. By introducing examples by well-known photographers through slide shows, books, and magazines, we taught students to recognize what is involved in making formally strong images. Students learned that the best photographs combined elements of form and content in different proportions. We asked students to look at their own black-and-white contact sheets with the criteria of design (light, line, and form) and content in mind. They circled photographs that showed either content or design or both. They were also allowed to pick two photographs that they wanted to have (the identity shots), along with the strongest photographs (the design shots), which we used later in the final presentation. This satisfied all parties on several levels.”

Nancy Wechter, Photographer/ICP Instructor

JOURNAL ENTRIES



Dear Diary,

Today I awake to a lot of cheering from outside. I come to the deck and see the Statue of Liberty. I am speechless and so excited. I am the last passenger to get off. I hesitate, it is a big step, this last one. I stall and look around me. I see the rest of Ellis Island, and beyond I see the famous New York City! I start to develop a tear in my eye, but I hold it back. But then I can't, so I start to cry and shout, "I've made it to America!" I am so loud that the others stare at me as if I am crazy. Then I take the last step and whisper to myself, "I have finally made it to America."

Character of Ezequiel created by student Miguel Perez Velez

Dear Diary,

I got an apartment in New York City on the Lower East Side of Manhattan island. My room is right above a Chinese restaurant. This town is very rowdy at night so I can't sleep too good. I miss how quiet it is back home at night. I don't like how people beg for money on every corner. I'm not sure if they need money or are trying to take advantage of me. I will not be a master carpenter here because my English is poor. I hope I will find work as a carpenter soon. Ciao.

Character of Gianni created by student Steven Frias

FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY: A CURRICULUM GUIDE

This chapter is an excerpt from *Focus on Photography: A Curriculum Guide*

Written by **Cynthia Way** for the **International Center of Photography**

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Published by the International Center of Photography, New York.

Printed in the United States of America.

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This project has been made possible with generous support from Andrew and Marina Lewin, the GE Fund, and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Cultural Challenge Program.

12

Photography and Multicultural Education

OVERVIEW

This chapter explores how photography can connect to multicultural studies and presents a case study at a middle school.

Figure 79



Portraying Community

Comparing one's personal heritage with a variety of cultural histories broadens one's view of the world and oneself. This is the essence of multicultural education, which can be defined as the examination of the multiple cultures and social and political forces that shape a society. The field endeavors to counteract the occlusion of some cultures and genders from serious artistic and academic examination. (For example, it promotes the study of African American artwork as opposed to studying only Eurocentric artwork.)

Multicultural education engages in a valuable exercise of social criticism and political thought but also poses a challenge: how to examine the many cultural traditions that shape our lives without being reductive or divisive. Using art as a means to navigate the complicated terrain of multiculturalism helps to articulate who we are as a culture and how we need to grow.

Photograph by photograph, students can begin to formulate a portrait of a community in a way that reflects its cultural complexity. This examination is rendered most beautifully by documenting the neighborhood's daily activities, people at work or at play, and also can include photographing special events that commemorate tradition. With a camera in hand, students feel that they have permission to explore and reflect upon their neighborhood. Emboldened with photography skills, students can take a field trip to explore another neighborhood that they might consider new or strange.

Creating self-portraits and portraits of people encountered in the neighborhood is a way to examine personal and cultural identity. Interviewing the subjects of portraits can yield oral stories that offer an unmediated view of what shapes the community. Furthermore, such primary sources can initiate cross-cultural communication, for example, by sending photographs and writings to pen pals in different parts of the world. By comparing pictures that show the similarities and differences between students' heritage and another culture, students develop critical thinking and communication skills, while also addressing important issues about race, class, history, and society.

Combining photography with a multicultural curriculum gives students a creative avenue to deal with the issues that affect their lives. The idea is to link the photographic exploration with history and social studies, thereby helping students understand the composition and organization of their community, past and present. More than just picturing diversity, such a photography project helps students address the issues that they face every day, such as race, class, power—minority and majority. It places their personal experiences within a larger context. Broadening their perspective strengthens their ability to deal with these issues.

In this chapter's case study, ICP educators used photography to explore the multi-ethnic heritage of a middle school's neighborhood. The theme focused on how art can communicate about culture, preserve tradition, examine ethnicity, and articulate a view of our lives.

The pathway for the curriculum connection was the repetition of the photographic assignment in different contexts: to focus and frame pictures that show evidence of ethnic diversity. Beforehand, instructors prepared students to ask for permission to take pictures of strangers, thereby building communication skills. Teachers in history and social studies referred to the work in the photography project, to reinforce the curriculum connection. Students drew on what they were studying in other classes as they created images of the rich cultural history of their neighborhood.

The project also examined the long history of artistic traditions and achievements by artists from East Harlem to bolster a sense of community pride and awareness about artistic legacy, of which the students are a part. In their photographic work, students examined the multiple cultural traditions of their community and revealed their own family's personal traditions.

Figure 80



Figure 81



Figure 82



Figure 83



Figure 84



Figure 85



Figure 86



CASE STUDY

MULTI-ETHNIC HERITAGE OF EAST HARLEM

Considering ACES's emphasis on community service, the ICP project emphasized photography as a means for communicating a set of ideas about the community. To link to multicultural education, ICP educators focused on the theme of the multi-ethnic heritage of East Harlem. In turn, school faculty related the photography course to topics in history and social studies.

Through creating and responding to photographs of people and street scenes in East Harlem, these eighth graders examined the ethnicity of this lively community. They discovered the many cultures that have called East Harlem home from Native American to Italian to Jewish to German to Hispanic and to African.

Using manual 35mm cameras, the young photographers documented the daily life of the neighborhood and the ways that traditions have been sustained through religion, festivals, parades, clothing, and food. As students ventured into the neighborhood, they made contact with people of various cultures, participated in festivals, and tasted cultural specialties. The assignment was to look for evidence of ethnicity during field trips to La Marqueta, the East Harlem streets and markets, where storefront windows contained cultural objects; a Mexican bakery on All Soul's Day, where they tasted bread; El Museo del Barrio, where they documented the Three Kings' Day Parade; and neighborhood casitas, the Caribbean-style homes with gardens just coming into bloom. Their resulting pictures revealed their ability to use photography skills such as

ICP Community Record Program at the Academy for Community Education and Service (ACES) 1997-1998

Academy for Community Education and Service (ACES), located in East Harlem, New York, was a middle school with an emphasis on communication arts and social service.

Audience: 56 eighth-grade students

Collaborating Staff: ICP Coordinator of Community Programs Cynthia Way; ICP Instructor Nancy Wechter; ACES Faculty Monique Lee; ACES Director Linda Hill; ICP Teaching Assistants Helen Giovanello, Sasha Musa, and Kareem Warley; Intern Sherry Drapkin.

This program was made possible with the support of the Surdna Foundation.

The resulting curriculum met national and state standards in the visual arts, as well as state standards in social studies.

framing and focus to show evidence of various cultures within East Harlem. They also practiced these “seeing” skills by venturing into other neighborhoods. During a field trip to Ellis Island, they responded to a photography exhibition of New York City’s first immigrants and documented the site that had drawn together so many people from different places.

Class sessions included workshops with guest artists to address how ethnicity is represented in images. Joe Rodriguez shared his photography book on Spanish Harlem and helped students to photograph the people they encountered on the street. Chester Higgins, Jr. shared his work and talked about the African celebration Kwanzaa. Phyllis Galembo showed her photographs of people from different cultures around the world. Then she transformed the classroom into a studio, leading a hands-on portraiture session that introduced students to medium-format photography as they created formal portraits of each other.

Students explored their own heritage by creating family pictures with point-and-shoot cameras that they were able to take home. They wrote observations about the photographs, the community, and family traditions. Some even shared home-style recipes, passed on from generation to generation. Through their photographs and writings, they succeeded in conveying their perspectives of the fabric of life in East Harlem. Throughout the year, faculty posted pictures in the ACES art gallery for the rest of the school to see.

A final publication documented the students’ discoveries: photographs of people, events, scenes, close-ups, and cityscapes that revealed the culture of the city, past and present. Interwoven with the student work were biographies of artists who either lived or worked in East Harlem, some of whom had either visited or been discussed in class. The journal’s design provided space for students to write observations, create poetry, and draw pictures. ICP staff distributed extra copies of the journal to the school for use in other classes the following year.

CASE STUDY CURRICULUM

Multi-Ethnic Heritage of East Harlem

1997-1998

This curriculum outlines assignments and activities for the class sessions described in the case study. Many sessions are based on lesson plans or activities that correspond to the **Focus Links** in *Part IV*. To adapt this project to your setting, review the related **Focus Links** to find general lessons plans and exercises that you can tailor to your students' needs.

Related Focus Links:

Sample Curriculum Sequence

See *Part IV*.

Focus Link 1

SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY

- Present slides on East Harlem neighborhood (Helen Levitt, Walter Rosenblum, Bruce Davidson, Arnold Eagle)
- Discuss theme: What is ethnic?
- Introduce photography basics
- Conduct hands-on exercise: Exploring portraiture and point of view with Polaroid cameras and film

Focus Link 2

SESSION 2 CAMERA AS A TOOL

- Instruct camera handling using the 35mm camera

Focus Link 7

SESSION 3 GALLERY VISIT

- Tour ICP exhibitions and darkroom to see how photographs are made

Focus Link 3

SESSION 4 CREATING IMAGES

- Practice camera-handling skills at a neighborhood site chosen by students
- Homework: Look in a newspaper to find examples of pictures showing cultural heritage
- Process black-and-white contact sheets at lab

Focus Link 4

SESSION 5 DISCUSSING IMAGES

- Provide feedback on photographic techniques
- Edit contact sheets
- Discuss the newspaper images and how media communicates about culture

Focus Link 3

SESSION 6 CREATING IMAGES

- Document evidence of ethnic heritage at the bakery and on the street on Mexican All Soul's Day

Assignment: Focus on evidence of ethnic heritage

- Process 4" x 6" color prints at lab

Focus Link 6

SESSION 7 EDITING IMAGES

- Deliver feedback on prints
- Present slides on neighborhood history
- Discuss handout, A Brief History of East Harlem (See Educational Material in this chapter.)
- Homework: Each week, photograph family traditions with point-and-shoot cameras

Focus Link 9

SESSION 8 GUEST ARTIST VISIT

- Introduce photographer Joe Rodriguez, who presents his work in Spanish Harlem and discusses how to ask permission to take photographs of strangers
- Review student work

Focus Link 3

SESSION 9 FIELD TRIP

- Visit Ellis Island to view photography exhibition on immigrants and photograph this site

Assignment: Focus on evidence of ethnic heritage

- Process black-and-white contact sheets at lab

Focus Link 6

SESSION 10 DISCUSSING IMAGES

- Edit contact sheets
- Assignment: Using selected pictures, write in response to the question, What is ethnic?
- Homework: Research and write about family traditions

Focus Link 9

SESSION 11 GUEST ARTIST VISIT

- Introduce Phyllis Galembo who presents her photographs of people from around the world
- Hands-on activity: Create formal student portraits using a medium-format camera with the guest artist
- Process 5" x 7" black-and-white prints at lab

Focus Link 7

SESSION 12 GALLERY VISIT

- Tour the Lower East Side Tenement Museum
- Document the Lower East Side neighborhood
Assignment: Focus on evidence of ethnic heritage
- Process black-and-white contact sheets at lab

Focus Link 3

SESSION 13 CREATING IMAGES

- Photograph Three Kings' Day parade and East Harlem neighborhood
Assignment: Focus on evidence of heritage
- Process black-and-white contact sheets at lab

Focus Link 6

SESSION 14 EDITING IMAGES

- Edit contact sheets relating to the theme
- Process final 8" x 10" black-and-white prints at lab

Focus Link 10

SESSION 15 ASSEMBLING THE FINAL PROJECT

- Edit, sequence, and write captions for pictures relating to the theme

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

A Brief History of East Harlem

by Nancy Wechter

East Harlem stretches from 96th Street to 142nd Street. Bounded by Fifth Avenue and the East River, East Harlem includes Randall's and Ward's Islands, which can be reached by a pedestrian bridge.

Originally dotted with Native American settlements, the area remained mostly farmland until well into the nineteenth century when the train lines were extended northward and the area began to lose its bucolic character. Because the trains made the area accessible, more and more developers built housing. The availability of work and the desire to escape the overcrowding of the Lower East Side drew large numbers of immigrants to East Harlem. For the past 100 years, this unique community has been home to one of the most diverse working class populations in the country.

First, Germans and Irish moved into East Harlem. The next wave resulted in the largest Little Italy in the United States in the area east of Third Avenue with its heart at 116th Street. Jewish Harlem, west of Third Avenue, was settled by immigrants from Eastern Europe and became the second largest Jewish neighborhood in the city. By the 1950s the Puerto Rican community grew in East Harlem, creating El Barrio, which has become synonymous with the neighborhood ever since. There emerged smaller communities of Greeks, Scandinavians, and English.

Today, although many traces of older settlers remain, the population of East Harlem is almost equally African American and Latino. Still, newer immigrant groups are joining the community and changing the mix. Large numbers of people from Africa, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean are contributing to the varied life of this vital community, making it one of the most exciting parts of New York City.

EDUCATORS' QUOTES



“

I have a special love for East Harlem and a deep knowledge of its history from having taught in that community for 10 years and being a member of the East Harlem Historical Association. I'm fascinated by the layered traces left by immigrant group following immigrant group. The students got a sense of this through slides of East Harlem 'back in the day' by photographers such as Helen Levitt, Walter Rosenblum, Bruce Davidson, and Arnold Eagle, plus images from the collection of the Museum of the City of New York. It was fun to see the eighth graders look at their neighborhood, hence themselves, in a new way. They were proud. What they first regarded as junky old East Harlem now had a fascinating history. They began to look more closely. Imagine seeing goats and chickens in a shack on Madison Avenue and 116 Street from 1900!

Throughout the class we discussed traditions in food. Students wrote about their family traditions surrounding holidays. What was tradition? For that matter, what was ethnic? Each week two students took home point-and-shoot cameras to document their homes, families, and family activities. Students shared their family's precious recipes. The final activity of the year was a party to which students and their parents brought in a staggering array of ethnic food from roast pork to macaroni and cheese to rice and beans. The project was so rich. East Harlem is so vivid and alive, just like the eighth graders. A perfect match for a photography project.”

Nancy Wechter, Photographer/ICP Instructor

STUDENTS' QUOTES

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The things that I saw in photography class made me aware of the ethnic diversity of East Harlem. I saw the way people have stayed in the community and how East Harlem has such a fun background and past. The thing I liked about photography was that we could look at ethnic things, and also it brought our class together.”

Jamel Augustus, ACES Student

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Reading about what it was like 'back in the day' and taking pictures of how things are today were very interesting. I liked going out to take pictures and seeing how things have changed. There are different buildings and renovations. Back in the old times there were push carts where La Marketa is now.”

Adela Guity, ACES Student

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What I liked about photography is that we got to take pictures of people, things, and places. I liked going outside and learning things I didn't know about or didn't see before. I saw different cultures, food, clothes, structures, and statues.”

Tanya Jones, ACES Student

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Seeing the casitas down by 119th Street between First and Second Avenues made me aware of the ethnic diversity of East Harlem. The casitas show the East Harlem cultural mix because they are the type of thing you'd see in the Puerto Rican countryside.

Nancy Ramirez, ACES Student

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My family celebrates with everyone coming over and having a lot of Spanish food like chicken and rice, macaroni and cheese, and a lot of sweets. We listen to Spanish music. A tradition that was passed down to me from older family members is how we make our rice.”

Laura Calderon, ACES Student

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The family traditions that were passed down to me were love, care, and happiness in life.”

Precious Tindall, ACES Student

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Some famous people who are or were residents of East Harlem are African Americans like Pearl Primus who was one of the first to bring African dance to public attention, and Earl Manigault the basketball player who first touched the backboard, and Puerto Ricans like Tito Puente ‘The King of Latin Music,’ and Marc Anthony, a rising star in Salsa.”

Alexis Laster, ACES Student

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In photography class, I learned that there were and are many different kinds of cultures here in the Barrio.”

Ilsa Ordonez, ACES Student

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What I liked about photography class was learning about where I live.

Christine Oliveras, ACES Student

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ICP taught us how to work the camera—how to put the film in and how to look through the camera. I enjoyed learning about cameras.”

Tanya Hendricks, ACES Student

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Photography brings out an inner person. You can take pictures of anything and anyone. It makes you feel good.”

Omar Mims, ACES Student