

## **FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY: A CURRICULUM GUIDE**

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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 II



# Teaching Photography



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# Teaching the Basics: History, Techniques, Aesthetics, and Practice

## OVERVIEW

This chapter discusses how to develop an effective, balanced curriculum in basic photography. Sample curriculum and lesson plans address how to teach photography in darkroom and non-darkroom formats, including using digital imaging. Examples are provided for working in elementary, middle, and high school settings.

Figure 13



# Building a Curriculum

Everyone has the capacity to interpret and create images. As educators, we need to use a teaching process that best develops our young photographers. A good curriculum brings out the innate creativity of the students, builds their interpretative and technical skills, and enhances their understanding of the power of photography to communicate their perspectives of the world.

To do so, the curriculum should incorporate four main ingredients: **history**, **techniques**, **aesthetics**, and **practice**. It should be inspiring and evolve in response to the needs of the audience.

The success of the curriculum depends upon an educator's understanding of the nature of the audience, the setting, and his or her teaching methods.

- 1 Know your audience. Who are you teaching? Where do they come from? What interests them? What challenges them? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Pay attention to what will help them grow.
- 2 Be realistic about and sensitive to the context in which you are teaching. Each organization has its own goals, standards, criteria, resources, and working methods. Whether a school or community center, this atmosphere influences the students, and therefore, the curriculum must draw on the strengths and deal with the weaknesses of this setting.
- 3 Ask yourself what you bring to the equation. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are your views on art and the range of your skills? Your sensibility has an incredible influence on the students and the educational impact of the curriculum.

At the same time that a photography curriculum should meet both local and national educational standards, teaching should inspire. Art education can meet many criteria, but real education takes place when a student beams looking at her newly printed image, or when one student helps another to get the lighting just right. The root word for education “*educare*” means to “lead out,” and when a teacher is able to draw something out from students, to help them manifest an idea with a new skill or to share that new skill with others, then real education is taking place.

Therefore, you and your curriculum must be open to the vagaries of the artistic process. First and foremost, teach students to operate the camera as a tool. To learn techniques. To understand light. To see and interpret images. To acknowledge their own point of view as valid. Once students have basic techniques and a little confidence, their explorations can take on a life of their own. Step out of their way, don't be too didactic, let the images happen.

Using the four ingredients of history, technique, aesthetics, and practice as if you were a chef, add in history when the recipe needs a little base, technique when the sauce is too thin, aesthetics for seasoning, and lest it all burns, remind students to keep stirring, to practice, practice, practice.

## History

Grounding photographic projects in art history is important, but often presents the challenge of engaging students in something they perceive as dry, boring, or outside the sphere of their lives. To make it more personal, define history as legacy—a legacy of which they, as young artists, are part. Rather than lecturing on art history, present and discuss historical and contemporary photographs in a way that connects the photographic legacy to the students' lives. The connection can be as broad as women photographers or as specific as neighborhood history, depending on your audience and curricular goals. You can examine contemporary trends in digital imaging or career opportunities using applications of photography.

Students are interested in how things are made, so discussing the craft and working method of historical and contemporary photographers is another way to engage students in art history. Analyzing photographic work with students builds their visual literacy skills. Discuss the images in terms of craft and composition. Focus on the choices that the photographer made to create the images. Discover the message that the photograph is communicating. In this way, you are stimulating the students' visual sensitivity, which in turn informs their image making. (For guidance in discussing photographs, see *Part I, Chapter 3: Visual Literacy* and **Focus Links 11–15** in *Part IV*. Also see **Focus Link 43** – What Makes a “Good” Photograph?)

Timing is flexible. By showing historical and contemporary work before students create their own images, you can shape and direct a project. This enables the class to meet a curricular goal and to assemble a final project. Alternatively, you can respond to students' images by showing other artists' approaches. You can use historical and contemporary work to address ideas and techniques that they are having trouble

understanding. This approach allows students to guide the process, but it can take more time to achieve a specific curricular goal, such as developing a final photo essay. Either way, it is important to enrich students' understanding of the medium's history so that they grow photographically.



Figure 14

## Technique

Photography is all about process. The latent image becomes manifest because of process. The creation of the image depends on technique. There are many options for capturing an image with light: different types of film, cameras, and lighting sources. There are also different ways to render the images in final form: prints, slides, transfers, projections, Web sites, etc. The goal is to give students an understanding of the techniques and their effects on the resulting images.

Begin by teaching the basics: the camera as a tool. Demystify the camera; it is, after all, a dark box. (The word “camera” literally means dark box.) You can work with any type of camera or image-making device from 35mm cameras to digital cameras to automatic cameras to pinhole cameras, and so forth, depending on your students’ level and curriculum project. Rather than intimidating or overloading students, instruct technique at their pace. The mastery of technique, when it becomes second nature, and the development of an individual working method can take a long time.

If appropriate to the students’ level, ICP educators highly recommend using manual 35mm cameras, because students learn how to manipulate controls, such as shutter speed and aperture, ultimately gaining confidence from achieving the desired effect. When using digital cameras, it is equally beneficial to teach mastery of the camera controls. If necessary, cameras can be shared in pairs, and this has the added benefit of encouraging students to work together as they learn how to operate the camera. When using alternative or automatic cameras, be aware of the technical limitations and set expectations accordingly.

Key concepts, such as point of view, framing, lighting, and composition, can be taught using any camera and should be part of every course. These concepts are important to emphasize when using automatic or digital cameras. Also, if there is no access to a darkroom, many hands-on activities impart a sense of process, and these can be combined with using digital and traditional 35mm cameras. (See the non-darkroom curriculum in this chapter.) Having film and prints processed outside of class actually opens up more instruction time for making meaningful images and discussing how pictures communicate.

Technique and process are often what captivate students most. They enjoy learning about how to operate the camera and compose an image. They are entranced by the magic of watching the latent image appear in the darkroom. Hands-on learning can channel their energy and focus their attention. Finally, they feel gratified to hold in their hands a concrete representation of what they saw with their eyes.

Figure 15: Photographer Chester Higgins, Jr. meets with students.



## Aesthetics

Appreciating the aesthetics of art is like having an appreciation for the qualities of life. Aesthetics asks, What is the nature, quality, and meaning of art? When we consider aesthetics, we look at the way artists describe what they see and sense in the world and what they think is beautiful. In turn, this expands our own idea of what is beautiful.

You can build students' aesthetic sense by developing their understanding of the composition, the style, and the formal qualities of the artwork. This can be achieved in many ways:

**1** Discuss their imagery

- Critiquing student work is an important way for students to receive feedback and encouragement from teachers and peers. Instead of using the value judgments of “good” and “bad,” focus on technique and effect, on how the photograph “works.” Ask students to talk about their favorite picture and why they think it works. What specific techniques are working well? What effect does the lighting have? What is the photograph saying? Be sure to be specific and to use terms that are familiar from past discussions. (See **Focus Links 11-15**.)

**2** Present the work of other artists

- The discussion of artwork using slide presentations, books, and original art broadens students’ understanding of aesthetics. Tailoring the presentation to the class theme helps build knowledge on the topic. Slide presentations should be brief and contextualized, meaning students should understand why they are viewing the images. (See **Focus Link 11**.)

### 3 Bring in guest artists

- Students understand aesthetics much more clearly through a personal connection. A guest artist can visit the class to share his or her work, demonstrate a technique, or work on a project. The guest artist provides a positive role model and inspiration for future careers in art. Avoid the temptation to let the guest artist simply present work or “take over” the class. It is important to integrate the guest artist visit within the class. Beforehand, plan with the guest artist and prepare students. Make sure you keep the visit oriented to the theme. During the visit, have students interact with the artist. Afterward, follow up with a related activity. (See **Focus Link 9** for a lesson plan on integrating the guest artist visit.)

### 4 Visit museums and galleries

- Seeing original artwork up close in a museum or gallery helps students understand the formal and technical qualities of the photograph. Touring pictures in an installation is an experience in itself, with attributes like pacing, sequencing, the assimilation of textual information and other media, all of which expands an understanding of aesthetics. (See **Focus Link 7** for a lesson plan on integrating the gallery visit.)

Figure 16



## Practice

Students learn photography best by doing it. Hands-on learning should be part of every session. Practicing technique focuses students, creates vital learning experiences, and builds confidence. Once you have provided just enough information for students to absorb, let them practice using the camera, mixing chemistry, or making the print on their own. Prepare worksheets or signs to help students remember important information when they work independently. Have them work in pairs or teams with clearly defined roles and assignments so they can learn from each other. As the teacher, circulate through the group to repeat instructions and offer suggestions as needed, guide students when they have questions, and challenge them to experiment with new ideas and techniques. Be aware of when they are ready for more information, when they need help, or when they are best left to practice on their own.

Equally important is reflection. Having students write, draw, or create image journals helps them process art's impact. They use visual thinking skills as they draw and arrange images. They practice their writing skills as they explore what they think and feel about their artwork. Holding active, constructive discussions about artwork with peers builds their communication—and diplomatic—skills. Using other art media for reflection activities is engaging and also opens more opportunities to talk about photography in comparison to other media, what each media can say and how it says it (see *Part III*, chapters 14 and 15). In addition, the resulting reflections provide another way to gauge students' progress (see *Chapter 6: Meeting Educational Goals*). Most important, reflecting upon their images lets what they are learning about photography "sink in" and deepens their approach to image making. Without an understanding of the choices they are making and why, they will not grow as artists.

Practice is the heart of a photography course. Because of the high level of active engagement, hands-on practice and reflection sessions most effectively build visual literacy skills and reinforce academic topics in a curriculum connection. (See *Part III*.)

Figure 17



## Timing Activities in a Curriculum

Timing can be tricky: Each setting has a different amount of time allotted for class, and students learn at different paces. When timing the activities in a curriculum, judge how long it will take your students to cover certain topics. Be open to adapting your curriculum to allow for more time to practice a technique or reflect on process.

Logistically, when ICP educators work in schools, they request two periods, totaling 1½ hours. One and one half hours is the minimum amount of time needed for creating pictures during field trips in the neighborhood. Two hours is better, if possible. Two and one half hours works well for an active darkroom session. Three hours is too long for younger groups to stay focused in class, but older groups can handle three hours if darkroom work is incorporated into the class time. (You'll have a hard time getting them out of the darkroom!)

Hands-on activities such as camera handling and photographic field trips take 1 to 1½ hours. Film processing takes 1 hour. Printing requires a minimum of 2 hours. Slide presentations should last for about 15 to 20 minutes, any longer and you may notice students dozing in that nice, warm, dark atmosphere! Sometimes, ICP educators have added music to slide presentations to provide another level of emotional connection (and keep students awake). Educators have also intermingled student work with that of professional photographers to (1) make the point that they are part of the photographic legacy and (2) address a certain concept, such as point of view, with a variety of work. Some have even included slides of written terms as part of the sequence to build vocabulary.

The curricula in this book typically uses a 2-hour class session, meeting once a week, based on ICP partnerships in schools and community centers. *Focus* curriculum activities should be adapted to your setting and audience.

## Sequencing the Lessons

Students learn in a variety of modes: receiving information (reading and listening), doing, discussing, writing, and reflecting. A good curriculum integrates all these modes to engage different learning styles and to allow for the material to “sink in.” Ideally, each lesson or each sequence of lessons on a topic should include activities that involve these different modes of learning.

For example, a curriculum on basic photography first introduces point of view through a brief slide presentation showing examples of point of view, followed by a shooting assignment on point of view. After the film is processed in the next lesson, students discuss and edit their work, pose questions, and then write reflections. In this way, the concept of point of view is previewed, practiced, and reviewed. Each

lesson has incorporated different modes of learning: receiving information, practicing technique, and reflecting upon the results. In addition, a connection to another curriculum topic, literature, for example, can be made by discussing the point of view in an assigned reading. Students then can write a creative story from the point of view of someone in a photograph. This connection adds the learning modes of reading and writing. Moreover, the whole process is a visual learning experience that builds visual literacy skills.

## Basic sequence

The following basic sequence is the cornerstone of a good curriculum. All *Focus* curricula illustrate various adaptations of this sequence.

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### SESSION A: INSTRUCTION

- Introduce aesthetics and techniques by presenting and discussing relevant photographic work
- Familiarize students with tools and techniques by showing examples and demonstrating or practicing use
- Provide instruction on the camera as a tool, lighting, or printing

---

### SESSION B: PRACTICE

- Allow hands-on practice in techniques
- Guide students as they create images, working independently, in teams, or as a group
- Provide opportunities for photographic field trips or studio shoots

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### SESSION C: REFLECTION

- Display resulting images so all students can see and review them
- Reflect on the results through discussion, writing, or a hands-on activity
- Edit images independently or in teams, write an artist's statement, or make a final slide show

(Note: At this point, you may wish to review Part IV's sequential series of *Focus* Lesson Plans. *Focus* lesson plans are the building blocks for the curriculum in this book and are referred to in the following samples. You can adapt *Focus* lesson plans to the needs of your age group or the theme of your curriculum.)

## Sample lessons plans for an elementary, middle, and high school setting

The following series of sample lessons shows how the basic sequence is realized and also how activities can be adapted to various age levels. It presents an elementary school activity for Session A, a junior high school activity for Session B, and a high school activity for Session C. (More information on working with specific age groups can be found in *Chapter 5: Strategies for Developing Projects*.) The topic explored in this series is point of view.

Figure 18



## SESSION A: INSTRUCTION – ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### GOAL

---

To familiarize students with techniques and aesthetics of photography by showing examples and conducting hands-on activities

To introduce the concept of point of view

### MATERIALS

---

Slides/Slide projector

Polaroid cameras

Polaroid film

### DURATION

---

2 hours

### ACTIVITIES

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*Discussing pictures: [30 min.]*

- Discuss point of view by projecting a slide.
  - Can you guess where the photographer was standing when he/she took this picture? This is called point of view.
- Ask students to describe what they see in the picture frame
- Ask students to imagine what they would have seen if the photographer had taken the picture from a different point of view
- Repeat with several slides that connect to their class project
- Show examples of a bird's-eye view and a worm's-eye view
- Illustrate point of view by asking half of the students to stand up pretending to be birds and half crouch down on the ground pretending to be worms. Have them look at each other from their point of view. Then switch.

*Creating images: [1 hr.]*

- Demonstrate the steps to use a Polaroid camera (Note: Pre-load the film.)
  - 1 Choose a point of view
  - 2 Press the shutter release
  - 3 Take the picture from the front of the camera and let the picture develop on a table

- Give them their assignment: Take five pictures
  - 1 Bird's-eye view
  - 2 Worm's-eye view
  - 3 Mystery view: Pretend you're a different animal and take a picture from that point of view
  - 4 Your eye view
  - 5 Surprise me

#### WRAP-UP [30 MIN.]

- Put all the pictures on tables to discuss the various viewpoints. Use this as an opportunity to categorize. Put birds and worms on separate tables. Put the eye view, the mystery, and the surprise in a row.
- Discuss the images. Let the students guess what kind of animal the mystery is. Have them share their surprise image.
- Discuss how point of view affects composition

#### Why it works for this audience

This lesson is hands-on and interactive. For an elementary school audience, the pacing is fast, and objectives are simple. The definition of point of view is presented and reinforced in a variety of ways. Discussing and creating images is turned into an imaginative game.

Figure 19



## SESSION B: PRACTICE – MIDDLE SCHOOL

### **GOAL**

---

To practice and learn photographic techniques and the concept of point of view

### **MATERIALS**

---

35mm cameras

Black-and-white film

Large prints that show bird's-eye, worm's-eye, and other points of view

### **DURATION**

---

2 hours

### **ACTIVITIES**

---

*Preparation [30 min.]*

- Show and discuss samples of point of view
- Review camera-handling techniques
- Present assignment:
  - 1 Take a picture of yourself to identify your roll of film
  - 2 Take two pictures from a bird's-eye and two from a worm's-eye point of view
  - 3 Choose five subjects
  - 4 Take five pictures of each subject from different points of view
- Review camera-handling basics:
  - 1 Choose your point of view
  - 2 Check the exposure: depth of field and shutter speed
  - 3 Focus
  - 4 Frame the image
  - 5 Press the shutter release
  - 6 Advance the film

*Hands-on practice [1 hr. 15 min.]*

- Hand out cameras and do the assignment

#### **WRAP-UP [15 MIN.]**

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- Rewind film
- Return cameras
- Review journal assignment: Write reflection on taking pictures (See **Focus Link 34.**)

#### **Why it works for this audience**

In middle school, students responds especially well to hands-on activities and thematic topics. In this lesson, the assignments and expectations are clear. This lesson emphasizes spending time on preparation and using the camera as a tool, thereby instilling a sense of the thought that goes into the creative process.

Figure 20

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## SESSION C: REFLECTION – HIGH SCHOOL

### GOAL

---

To display and reflect on the resulting photographs through discussion, writing, or a hands-on activity

### MATERIALS

---

Contact sheets (2 sets)

Loupes

Grease pencils

Scissors

Tape

Journals

### DURATION

---

2 hours

### ACTIVITIES [1½ HRS.]

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- Introduce editing assignment: having the class role-play as magazine editors
  - To review a photo essay in a magazine
  - To edit student images from the last shoot with several editorial criteria in mind
- Present magazine layout (Depending on the class size, you may wish to show the actual magazine, slides, or selected pages, mounted on poster board placed in a visible spot in the classroom.)
- Review examples of point of view in the magazine
  - How does the point of view work to reveal the photographer's attitude toward the subject?
  - How do the pictures work to tell a story?
- Define different kinds of shots: context (showing the environment around the subject), action, and close-up. (See *Part III, Chapter 14*'s exercise on Picture Stories.)
- Discuss how the images work because of design and content as a single image and in the layout (See **Focus Link 43** – What Makes a “Good” Photograph?)
  - What are the formal qualities of this picture?
  - What is its subject?
  - How do the formal qualities work to reveal the subject?
  - How does this picture work next to that one in the layout?
  - What would the story be like without this picture?

- Review student images and the concept of point of view
- Have students review their contact sheets with the eyes of editors
- Mark selections with a grease pencil on the contact sheet
  - Look for interesting point of view, revealing subject matter, strong design, and content
  - Look for a variety of types of shots (context, action, and close-up)
- Have them describe in their journals why they like their selections
- Cut out selections from the extra contact sheet
- Choose six pictures that tell a story
- Play with sequencing them
- Tape the final sequence in the journal

#### **WRAP-UP [30 MIN.]**

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- Review their sequences individually and select some for class critique
- Address any questions about point of view
- Ask them or have them write about what their experience of taking pictures was like. Was it different from how they had approached taking pictures before?
- Ask them or have them write about the editing process. Was it different than the last time, when there were fewer criteria?
- Remind them that the goal is to find a good point of view that communicates what you want to say about the subject

Figure 21



#### **Why it works for this audience**

This lesson puts a spin on the editing process by placing students in the position of being magazine editors. This is an effective way to connect to a high school audience, as they tend to be interested in how things are done and in professional aspects of the medium.

## Putting It All Together

Once you have a basic sequence, you can build a curriculum step by step to cover necessary techniques, skills, and subject matter. For an ideal 15-session course, the basic sequence (instruction, practice, reflection) is repeated over and over, each time delving more deeply into the topic matter.

The following sample curricula illustrate how these sequences can be arranged for either a darkroom or non-darkroom 15-session course. The essential difference between a darkroom and non-darkroom course is that a non-darkroom course compensates with hands-on activities that provide a sense of the photographic process. Because the benefit of the darkroom curriculum is devoting time to printing techniques, and because students can practice those skills in either a traditional darkroom or a digital “darkroom” (computer set up), the darkroom curriculum presents options for photography and digital imaging interchangeably.

It has been ICP’s experience that an effective photography curriculum incorporates history, technique, aesthetics, and practice, in the format of the basic sequence presented (instruction, practice, reflection). This framework provides a solid educational structure that builds photographic, visual literacy, and communication skills, while also allowing incredible freedom in course design, from thematic to technical choices.

A student’s excitement is visible whether clicking the shutter in time to capture motion or editing a contact sheet. Practicing photography helps students to value themselves and the world around them by seeing and reflecting upon it in new ways. With each image, students see more in themselves. It is as if they are pursuing their own mercurial reflection through photography. Making the latent materialize is powerful. Helping latent photographers become young artists, able to articulate their deepest feelings and ideas, is a thrilling educational gift.

## SAMPLE BASIC 15-SESSION CURRICULUM

### with darkroom access

Note: Because students can practice printing skills in either a traditional darkroom or a digital “darkroom” (computer set up), the darkroom curriculum presents both options. For more information on these darkroom set ups, see *Appendix 3*. For more information on digital imaging, see *Part III, Chapter 16: Photography & Digital Imaging*.

#### **GOAL**

---

Introduce students to the history, technique, aesthetics, and practice of photography using printing techniques to emphasize craft

#### **MATERIALS**

---

Journals (blank pages)

Polaroid cameras (can be shared in pairs)

Polaroid 600 Plus film (5 shots per student)

Materials for activities (See *Part IV*)

35mm manual cameras, traditional or digital (can be shared in pairs)

Darkroom or computer lab

#### **For traditional camera:**

Film (1 roll/36 exp. per camera per shoot)

Negative sleeves (1 x rolls of film)

Photographic paper (3 boxes RC 8" x 10" 500 sheets)

Chemistry and related darkroom materials (See *Appendix 3*.)

#### **For digital camera:**

Zip disk to store final images and curriculum resources at school

Printing paper (60 sheets, 8" x 10", six prints per student)

Computer software, scanner, and related materials (See *Appendix 3* and *Part III, Chapter 16: Photography & Digital Imaging*.)

**Related Focus Links:****Curriculum**

See Part IV.

***Focus Link 1*****SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION**

- Pose questions about photography, what it is, how it works, and where students have seen photographs, to assess what they know
- Present slides and discuss how to look at photographs
  - Pose questions appropriate to levels of visual literacy
  - Present samples of the final form of their project, if known, to show where they are heading
- Brainstorm theme
- Conduct hands-on Polaroid activity
- Distribute journals
- Homework: Free-writing related to theme

***Focus Link 2*****SESSION 2 CAMERA AS A TOOL**

- Discuss how the 35mm camera works, all its parts and its controls, using handouts and cameras (Note: If the manual controls on a digital camera don't allow for practicing certain techniques, such as shutter speed or depth of field, gear the lesson to framing and focus instead.)
- Let students practice operating the camera
- View examples of work illustrating controls such as shutter speed, depth of field, framing, or focus
- Homework: Take home an empty slide frame and view your home and neighborhood settings to practice framing

***Focus Link 3*****SESSION 3 CREATING IMAGES**

- Assignment: Practice techniques (stop motion, depth of field, framing, focus, or blur)
- Homework: Review technical reading (See the bibliography.)

**SESSION 4 PROCESSING IMAGES**

- Demonstrate traditional film processing in a lab/uploading digital images into a computer
- Tutor students as they process their own film/use computer software
- Homework: Review technical reading (See the bibliography.)

---

## **SESSION 5 PRINTING IMAGES**

- Make contact sheets or prints (two copies)
- Homework: Paste images (cut selections from contacts or use prints) in journal and write about the images and the experience of creating them

***Focus Link 34***

## **SESSION 6 CREATING IMAGES**

- Assignment: Point of view
- Homework: Process film/download digital images on own, if lab access allows (If not, you will need two printing sessions for every one listed in this curriculum. You can also do one less shoot.)

***Focus Link 5***

## **SESSION 7 PRINTING IMAGES**

- Work on printing skills
- Pin up samples of prints made at different settings so students have reference points
- Homework: Paste images in journal and write about them, focusing on point of view

***Focus Link 16***

***Focus Link 6***

## **SESSION 8 EDITING IMAGES**

- View student work as well as relevant historical and contemporary work
- Conduct story-writing exercise
- Discuss what to think about for the next shoot
- Homework: Collect images from publications relating to theme for journal

***Focus Link 17***

***Focus Link 7***

## **SESSION 9 GALLERY VISIT**

- View artwork related to project
- Discuss artwork and techniques used to communicate theme
- Document the trip
- Homework: Write a review of one of the gallery shows

***Focus Link 21***

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***Focus Link 5*****SESSION 10 CREATING IMAGES**

- Assignment: Focus on theme
- Homework: Process film/download digital images on own, if lab access allows

**SESSION 11 PRINTING IMAGES**

- Work on printing skills
- Discuss samples of prints made at different settings so students have reference points
- Homework: Paste images in journal and write about them, this time in sequences (See *Part III, Chapter 14: Photography & Writing*.)

***Focus Link 6*****SESSION 12 EDITING IMAGES**

- Discuss editing, showing examples of the final form of the project
- Make selections based on a theme
- Homework: Review images and make editing choices

***Focus Link 9*****SESSION 13 GUEST ARTIST VISIT**

- Introduce artist, who presents artwork and experiences as a professional
- Have students interview the artist
- With artist, review student work
- Select work for final format
- Homework: Continue printing

**SESSION 14 FINAL PRINTS**

- Tutor students as they make final prints
- Discuss an artist's statement
- Homework: Write an artist's statement

***Focus Link 22******Focus Link 10*****SESSION 15 FINAL PROJECT**

- Assemble final project (class review, exhibition, or publication)
- Evaluate class

## SAMPLE BASIC 15-SESSION CURRICULUM

without darkroom access

### **GOAL**

---

Introduce students to the history, technique, aesthetics, and practice of photography using non-darkroom activities to impart a sense of process

### **MATERIALS**

---

Journals (blank pages)

Film (1 roll per camera per shoot)

35mm manual cameras (can be shared in pairs)

Polaroid cameras (can be shared in pairs)

For materials for activities, see *Part IV*

Lab processing fees

See Part IV.

***Focus Link 1***

**SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION**

- Pose questions about photography, what it is, how it works, and where students have seen photographs, to assess what they know
- Present slides and discuss how to look at photographs
- Pose questions appropriate to levels of visual literacy
  - Present samples of the final form of their project, if known, to show where they are heading
  - Brainstorm theme
- Conduct hands-on Polaroid activity
- Distribute journals
- Homework: Write about Polaroid pictures in journal

**SESSION 2 PROCESS: SUN PRINTS**

- View sample sun prints and discuss the history of the process
- Create drawings on acetate relating to theme
- Illustrate the photographic process with a sun print activity
- Homework: Write about the images in the journal

***Focus Link 29***

***Focus Link 34***

***Focus Link 2***

**SESSION 3 CAMERA AS A TOOL**

- Discuss how the 35mm camera works, all its parts and controls, using handouts and cameras
- Let students practice operating the camera controls
- View examples of work illustrating controls such as shutter speed, depth of field, framing, and focus
- Homework: Take home an empty slide frame and view your home and neighborhood settings to practice framing

***Focus Link 3***

**SESSION 4 CREATING IMAGES**

- Assignment: Practice stop motion, depth of field, framing, focus, and blur
- Homework: Collect images from media and write about them in the journal
- Process: Film processing and printing (4" x 6" prints) done at lab

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***Focus Link 6*****SESSION 5 EDITING IMAGES**

- View student work and discuss successes and bloopers
- Discuss techniques and things to think about for the next shoot
- View and discuss relevant historical and contemporary work
- Conduct story-writing exercise with projected slide
- Homework: Paste images in journal and write about the images and the experience of creating them

***Focus Link 17******Focus Link 34******Focus Link 5*****SESSION 6 CREATING IMAGES**

- Assignment: Point of view
- Homework: Collect images that illustrate different points of view on the theme; write from the point of view of a photographer, then of a subject
- Process: Film processing (slides) done at lab

***Focus Link 9*****SESSION 7 GUEST ARTIST VISIT**

- Introduce artist, who presents artwork and experiences as a professional
- With artist, conduct hands-on demonstration of lighting using Polaroid film
- Review student work (slide show)
- Homework: Research a photographer

**SESSION 8 PROCESS: POLAROID TRANSFER*****Focus Link 27***

- Conduct a Polaroid transfer activity using slides
- Homework: Free-writing on theme

***Focus Link 3*****SESSION 9 CREATING IMAGES**

- Assignment: Focus on theme
- Homework: Continue working on image journal
- Process: Film processing and printing (contact sheets) done at lab

---

**Focus Link 7****SESSION 10 GALLERY VISIT**

- View original artwork
- Discuss artwork and techniques used to communicate theme
- Document the trip
- Homework: Write a review of one of the gallery shows
- Process: Film processing and printing (contact sheets) done at lab

**Focus Link 21****Focus Link 6****SESSION 11 EDITING IMAGES**

- Discuss editing, showing examples of the final form of the project
- Edit and discuss student images based on theme
- Process: Print selections (4" x 6") done at lab

**Focus Link 3****SESSION 12 CREATING IMAGES**

- Assignment: Focus on theme
- Homework: Continue working on image journal
- Process: Film processing and printing (4" x 6") done at lab

**Focus Link 9****SESSION 13 GUEST ARTIST VISIT**

- Introduce artist who presents artwork and professional experiences
- Review student work
- Select work for final format
- Homework: Paste images in journal and write about them, this time in sequences. (See *Part III, Chapter 14: Photography & Writing*.)
- Process: Final printing (8" x 10") done at lab

**Focus Link 6****SESSION 14 EDITING IMAGES**

- Edit final prints
- Discuss artist's statement
- Homework: Write an artist's statement

**Focus Link 22****SESSION 15 FINAL PROJECT**

- Present work in final format
- Evaluate class

# EDUCATORS' QUOTES



“

*When you work with kids, you quickly realize how much they are products of their environment, and at the same time completely themselves. They are struggling with a lot of things. They have a lot on their minds. I definitely try to avoid the social-work aspect of teaching, but sometimes I think of photography as being broken down into little life lessons. Lessons about attention to detail, about how work can pay off, about the search for beauty, about how to clean up after yourself, about working together, about listening, and about possibility.*

*Teaching photography is compelling because it has so many elements. There are the obvious ones, such as math, chemistry, and hand-eye coordination, but then there is also this alchemy of ‘the decisive moment’ that can’t really be taught. You can only lead students on the path to the discovery of the true magic and heartbreak of photography. It is often only arrived at by lucky accident. Part of what I do is to try to set the stage for the unexpected.*

*The stage is set by teaching camera skills and patience. It’s also about organization (of negatives and contact sheets) and consistency (temperatures, agitation, mixing of chemistry). I feel these lessons carry over beyond photography. Yet there are many ways to arrive at the same goal. For some kids, the ‘magic’ precedes the patience and inspires it to develop.”*

Mara Faye Lethem, Photographer/ Program Manager, ICP at The Point

“

*My teaching philosophy is to trust the photographer. I try to give essential practical information about using the camera, supported by many examples from the history of photography, stressing at all times that I take the students' own efforts seriously. I try to make them aware that they are expressing a particular point of view, and the subject is as much that point of view as the scene in front of the camera. When I juxtapose their own work with that of established photographers, they feel empowered and can see that they could have a valid place in the production of images of their time.*

*Practically speaking, here is how the field trips worked. The students were divided into groups of four and five, each group assigned one or two teaching assistants and one camera, which would be passed around the group in a fair way. (Each student would get to use the same amount of film, 18 frames per photographer, for example.) They were given different territories, a certain street corner and the sidewalk around it. They could photograph the exterior detail of Carnegie Hall as context, as well as the surrounding buildings, but they were encouraged to concentrate on little actions.*

*When it comes to actually taking the pictures, I try to stay out of their way as much as possible, to intrude on their experience as little as possible. Some are extroverted and some are introverted and there is no right or wrong way to photograph: There is just each person's way, and each person must arrive at that way of working. Our most conscious efforts as teachers and teaching assistants on the field trip were to make sure the students were safe in their activity. They were sometimes close to the street and working among strangers. Creatively, they were on their own, with a lot of preparation. They were exhilarated to claim that space and we were all 'wow'-ed by their results.”*

Allen Frame, Photographer/ICP Instructor

“

*Photography is visual communication, and kids have a lot to say. Let them say it, but guide them, show them the possibilities and the alternatives.*

*Young students have a shorter attention span, but you can show them the magic of photography in a way that will capture their imagination. Creative motivation should come from visual sources, for the most part, but words help. It is important to take students to galleries to see what we should call the end result. In class, show different types of images from the early days of photography to contemporary photographers. Show how images have changed over time, and also ask students an interesting question: What would your personal life be like if photography didn't exist? This makes students think about the importance of these images.*

*With older students, I stress being an individual. We talk about how we are different because of education, gender, religion, sexuality, culture, language, whether we're boring, and so forth. What makes us different? Why do we respond to things differently? We see and embrace that difference.*

*When we critique images, we break up into small groups and look at another group's work. The group talks about it; they elect one person to give their summary. There is less pressure in these small groups. I go from group to group and listen and give a suggestion here and there, but basically I let them do it on their own. We talk about composition, we talk about colors, we talk about tones, and what a person has to say.*

*I have many syllabi, but each time I teach it's a mixture of different ones. I start off with one syllabus, and after a week or two I get to know the students, and then I come up with different projects that work with the dynamics within that class.*

*Polaroid is a great teaching tool, with instant gratification that enables me to explain, motivate, and correct. You can cover depth of field, shutter speed, and composition. A digital camera is immediate too, but the Polaroid image is tangible: You can feel it, you can touch it, you can mark on it, it works.*

*Before taking a photography class, students are probably used to using point-and-shoot cameras. When you bring in a manual SLR (single lens reflex camera), and you start talking about the controls and the different types of film and how you can change the lens and how to shoot on days when it isn't bright, students get excited. They say, 'Are you kidding me, I can develop my own film at home and make pictures?' It's amazing to them. They don't understand that you can make a camera, create images, develop the film, and make prints. This is something new to them. It's hands-on. It's tangible—something they can do, something they can see developing right in front of their eyes.*

*I do a demonstration with each camera, and then I proceed to produce images. After the initial introduction to the 35mm SLR controls, I usually break it down in a simple way: one session on the 4" x 5" camera. Using the view camera, which is a little bit more sophisticated, we talk about how the shutter and the aperture work. I show how the controls on the view camera refer to both the view camera and the SLR. I use Type 55 Polaroid negative film, which gives a nice negative that you can use later for making contact prints and sun prints. I explain depth of field and illustrate it, and I do the same with shutter speed, and then with composition. The look on their faces says: 'Here is control.'"*

Curtis Willocks, Photographer/ICP Instructor

## **FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY: A CURRICULUM GUIDE**

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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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# 5

## Strategies for Developing Projects

### OVERVIEW

This chapter offers strategies for designing short-term and long-term projects in schools and community centers.

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Figure 22



# Short-Term Projects

## Integrating photography into the school curriculum

Photography is a wonderfully accessible medium that can reinforce curricular topics in even a short-term project. The keys to integrating the photography project into the school curriculum are to link to the course theme, prepare beforehand, and follow up afterward.

Whether going on a museum visit or documenting a school event as a short-term project, integrating photography into the course will make these experiences more meaningful. For example, just taking a history class to an exhibition of photographs on the Civil War does not capitalize on the educational potential of the experience. Successfully integrating a museum visit into the course involves preparatory activities, such as discussing Civil War photographs and reading about the exhibition; a tour with a guide or a discussion sheet that fosters visual literacy skills; and after the visit, a hands-on reflection activity that addresses how images communicate about history. Likewise, documenting a school project can include discussing elements of documentary photographs, inviting a guest artist to help create documentary photographs, and investigating creative methods to present the final documentation.

Because of time constraints, an effective strategy for integrating short-term projects is to simplify technique. The short-term project can still cover important principles in image making, aesthetics, and image interpretation and use. Using digital imaging, automatic cameras, or Polaroid materials can efficiently and easily add a hands-on photography component to a course. In such a short-term project, it is best to focus instruction in camera use on the elements of point of view, framing, composition, and lighting. These are some of the most important concepts in making photographs, they can be taught with any kind of camera, and the resulting skills apply when using any camera. To make the hands-on session meaningful, the activity should relate to the course theme, and students should discuss photographs beforehand and then reflect upon the images they created.

Even the simplest of projects should integrate history, technique, aesthetics, and practice. (See *Chapter 4: Teaching the Basics*.) The sequence of activities in the lesson should reinforce the skills to be learned through previewing, practicing, and reviewing. (See the basic sequence discussed in *Chapter 4*—instruction, practice, and reflection.)

In designing a short-term project, ask some guiding questions:

- What are the goals of the photography component?
- What skills will the students learn?
- How do these skills relate to educational standards?  
(See *Chapter 6: Meeting Educational Goals*.)
- How will the photography project connect to the course's overall theme?
- What activities will integrate the photography component into the course?
- How many sessions will the photography component be?
- What materials and techniques do I need for this project?
- How much will it cost?

Figure 23

---



The following sample curriculum illustrates how to integrate a short-term project into a history course.

## SAMPLE SHORT-TERM PROJECT

CLASS THEME: HISTORY/1930  
PROJECT: FAMILY HERITAGE & PHOTOGRAPHY

### **GOAL**

---

To explore family heritage and create a final photography project that illustrates the collective heritage of the class

### **DURATION**

---

Four 2-hour sessions with homework

### **PREPARATION**

---

Prior homework: Ask students to bring in photocopies of an important family portrait. Encourage students to find a picture that relates to the course theme.

### **MATERIALS**

---

Digital, disposable, or automatic cameras with flash

35mm color print film and processing

Tape recorders and tape

Poster board, tape, and other collage materials

Slide projector

Copier

**Related Focus Links:****Activities**

See Part IV.

**SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY PORTRAITURE****DISCUSS IMAGES [1 HR.]**

- Introduce family portraiture through a slide presentation of work by artists dealing with family issues (e.g., Clarissa Sligh, Tomai Arai, Tina Barney, Deborah Willis)
- Pose questions appropriate to levels of visual literacy by asking students to describe what they see and the choices the photographers made
- Discuss: What is a portrait? What is a snapshot?
- Discuss students' family portraits
- Have each student describe to the class what he or she sees in the family portrait by answering: Who is in the picture? What does the picture mean to your family? What story does it tell?

***Focus Link 17*****CONDUCT A WRITING ACTIVITY [45 MIN.]**

- List 10 details you notice in the picture
- Write a description of what you see in the portrait; include the 10 details
- If the person in the picture could speak, what do you think he or she would say?

**WRAP-UP [15 MIN.]*****Focus Link 38***

- Homework: Research project

- What time period does the family picture show?

- What was going on then?

- Write a report including facts from your research

**SESSION 2 PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES****INTRODUCE CAMERA-HANDLING TECHNIQUES [30 MIN.]**

- Using several slides or original artwork, point out different attributes of family portraits: use of details, framing, lighting, setting, foreground and background
- Review basics for operating the camera

- 
- Demonstrate camera techniques (Note: With one roll of film, use student models to demonstrate lighting. Use the light in the room and place the model in different poses in relation to the light to illustrate effects.)
  - Have students work in groups and practice illustrating point of view by taking pictures from different vantage points

#### **CREATE IMAGES [1 HR. 15 MIN.]**

- Review assignment
    - 1 Create portraits of family members from at least three different points of view
    - 2 Create a portrait of a family member showing something in the background that is important to them
    - 3 Create a portrait that reveals something about the family member, without showing the person
- (Note: Remind students to pay attention to lighting and framing.)

#### **WRAP-UP [15 MIN.]**

- Collect cameras and discuss processing
- Process: 4" x 6" prints

### **SESSION 3 REFLECTING ON IMAGES**

#### **CRITIQUE PICTURES [45 MIN.]**

- Focus on use of point of view, lighting, framing, and setting
- Conduct a writing activity [45 min.]
- Write about the person in the photograph. What do you think person is thinking about?

#### **WRAP-UP [30 MIN.]**

- Discuss and role-play interviewing techniques
- Review assignment
  - Interview family members using a tape recorder
  - Show them their portrait and ask them what they see
  - Ask them for a story from a time period relating to the class theme
  - Transcribe the story

---

## SESSION 4 ASSEMBLING THE FINAL PROJECT

### REFLECTION ACTIVITY: COLLAGE [2 HRS.]

- Show samples of collage and discuss basic principles for combining visuals, colors, and text
- Create a collage by cutting out different pictures and combining them with writing, research facts, interviews, and copies of the older family pictures
- Mount the resulting pictures on poster board in the classroom or an exhibition area

# Long-Term Projects

When developing a long-term project, consider using the *Focus* lesson plans in arrangements that correspond to your course theme. (See Part IV.)

## Lining up the dominoes: Concept and structure

When you develop a long-term project, you are building a structure out of concepts, which need to be clear, coherent, and manageable. Think of these concepts as dominoes, which can be arranged in multiple and winding patterns, but which need to line up with the right connection to one another in order to click together and reach the desired endpoint.

First, articulate your ideas and clarify your operating concepts, the **what**, **why**, and **how** (the dominoes). Then, turn your initial inspiration into a concrete structure, a **curriculum** and **budget** (the pattern of the dominoes). What is your project idea and how will the art be taught? You need to ask hard questions about yourself, the setting, and the audience. Then, you can plan a realistic timeline and project proposal that will structure and realize your idea.

Figure 24



## Developing your idea into a project proposal

The dream stage involves writing down your project ideas and making an outline of your dream curriculum. Considering finances provides the reality check. Figure out how much your dream curriculum will cost to implement. What resources do you have, and what more do you need? Alter your project plan and curriculum based on a realistic understanding of your available resources and what funds you can raise.

Free-writing answers to the following questions can help flesh out your ideas.

### **Guiding questions:**

- What kind of project do I want to create?
- What skills, ideas, and experiences do I bring to the equation?
- Who is my audience? What do they need to learn? What topics do they connect to most?
- What is the setting (e.g., school, museum, community center)?
- What is the nature of my partner (the partner can be an art educator, a school, or a cultural institution)? What does each partner bring to the equation?
- What are the goals?
- What are some project themes?
- What are some ideas for final projects?
- What are the educational objectives?
- What are the criteria for assessment?
- Where will class sessions take place?
- When will class sessions take place?
- What activities does the teaching space allow?
- What techniques can I teach?
- Who can I contact to teach other techniques?
- What field trips do I want to take?
- What equipment is available? What else do I need?
- What is the timetable?
- What is the curriculum?
- What financial resources are available?
- What is the project budget?

## Five steps to developing a long-term project

### **Step 1: What do you want to do? Why? How will you make it happen?**

The answers to what, why, and how are your goals and operating concepts.

### **Step 2: With whom are you working?**

Understanding the nature of all partners involved helps to focus ideas so that what you do makes sense for a particular age group or setting.

### **Step 3: What will the result be?**

Keeping in mind the final project and the educational objectives will help you plan your project and define your assessment criteria.

### **Step 4: Articulate your course overview.**

Flesh out exactly how you will meet your goals. You can then use a course overview to communicate with staff about what you want to do and what you need to make it happen.

### **Step 5: Make a project proposal, curriculum, timeline, and budget.**

Once you have a sense of what kind of course works in your context and is appropriate to your audience, you need to define what you need to make it happen.

This involves many steps:

- 1 Draft an outline of your curriculum.
- 2 Define your final project.
- 3 Move forward considering the skills that students need to learn step by step toward realizing their final project. In the curriculum, every step along the way needs to connect like dominoes or the educational process won't work and the final project won't happen.
- 4 Make a timeline. Work backwards from when your final project is due. Review your "dominoes." What do you need to do to make the project happen, and by when? Fit these needs into your class schedule. To double-check your curriculum, review it backwards and forwards. Remember that a curriculum will shift depending on how your students respond. Try to allow room for a reasonable amount of adjustments in your timeline and curriculum.
- 5 Craft your budget. The financial resources are the parameters that define what can be part of the course. Resources afford the following elements:
  - equipment
  - techniques
  - materials
  - number of class sessions with paid faculty and guest artists

First, dream big, then be practical. There is always a chance that you can raise money, create needed change within an organization, or partner with someone

to help create your dream project. And if not, keep your curriculum and budget flexible. Consider which project ideas and costs are nearly interchangeable. (For hints on planning a budget, see below.)

- 6 Draft the project proposal. It should answer the what, why, and how questions. It should specifically describe:
  - statement of need
  - goals
  - educational objectives
  - curriculum overview
  - criteria for assessment
  - timetable
  - budget
  - description of the final outcome

## PLANNING A BUDGET

Price materials by calling or visiting your local photography store. Final projects can be the most expensive component of a project, but you can reduce costs in many ways: using in-house resources, seeking volunteer help, asking for donations from local camera stores in exchange for credit and publicity, or contacting design schools to see if they would like to assist with an exhibition invitation or book as a class project. You can also apply for grants to support the project.

Basic budget categories for sample *Focus* curriculum:

<b>Faculty</b>	(\$rate x number of sessions)
<b>Guest artists</b>	(\$rate x number of sessions)
<b>Film</b>	(\$price x number of rolls – half the number of students if sharing cameras)
<b>Processing</b>	(\$price x number of rolls – either lab fee or chemistry)
<b>Paper</b>	(\$price x number of boxes) Note: Mete out paper to students based on what you can afford; use test strips; have students buy extra paper as needed.
<b>Journals</b>	(\$price x number of students)
<b>Misc.</b>	(tape, paper) (\$price – depends on activities)
<b>Cameras</b>	(\$price x ½ number of students.) Note: This is a capital investment.
<b>Field trips</b>	(\$admission x number of students; \$transportation x number of trips)
<b>Final projects</b>	(\$price – depends on project)

It is challenging to translate an idea into the words and figures that represent a concrete structure, such as a project description, timeline, and budget. Therefore, it is important to retain a sense of play for yourself as well as for the teaching artists and students. Once the concept (the what, why, and how) is defined, you have your set of “dominoes,” and then you can be inventive and playful in your design.

To illustrate the five steps to developing a project, the following case study outlines an ICP In-School Partnership. It is important to note that project design evolved through staff meetings with all partners. The teaching artist designed a curriculum in response to students’ interests, while navigating the goals of partnering organizations and contributing his own artistic expertise and ideas. This case study shows how the five steps play out in the context of an effective and multi-layered project.

# CASE STUDY

## PORTRAIT RHYTHMS

Figure 25



### STEP 1: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO? WHY? HOW WILL YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN?

The answers to what, why, and how are your goals and operating concepts.

**What:** In this In-School Partnership, ICP educators designed a connection between photography and music. To realize this project, ICP partnered with the Carnegie Hall Link Up Program, which provided extensive music appreciation and practice sessions for students at the Adolph S. Ochs School.

**Why:** Teaching photography in combination with music provided this at-risk audience with the motivation to learn, amplifying their studies in both media. The connection also was an opportunity for this school audience to access the resources of two nearby cultural institutions behind-the-scenes and to learn firsthand about professional artists, art's importance in culture, and the language of art.

**How:** The operating concept was to focus on the history, techniques, aesthetics, and practices of photography. While the connection between the language of photography and the language of music is abstract, focusing on portraiture made the connection more concrete. Technical assignments in photography and a discussion of composition explored movement, pattern, and rhythm in visual form. These concepts related to what was being taught in the music classes. To discuss the curriculum connections, planning meetings drew together staff from both organizations, the art instructors, and the school faculty.

## STEP 2: WITH WHOM ARE YOU WORKING?

Understanding the nature of all partners helps to focus ideas so that what you do makes sense for a particular age group or setting.

The partnering school was open to incorporating studies in portraiture into the school curriculum. Carnegie Hall educators were interested in a broad thematic connection between photography and music as well as a direct connection such as playing music in class. The idea was to keep reinforcing the concepts of movement, pattern, rhythm, and most important, composition—how artists compose with visuals or sounds in order to communicate what they see, feel, and sense in the world around them.

The students were seventh and eighth graders with a beginning knowledge of photography. They had to learn to operate the camera, understand lighting, and master

### ICP Community Record at the Adolph S. Ochs School 1997-1998

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

**Audience:** eighth-grade students

**Collaborating staff:** ICP Coordinator of Community Programs Cynthia Way; ICP Instructor Allen Frame; ICP Teaching Assistants Lou Dembrow and Karen Lindsay; OCHS Faculty George Morgan and Ellen Procida; Carnegie Hall Director of Education Phyllis Susan; New York Times Liaison Carolyn Lelyveld.

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.

other technical elements. Portraiture was an attractive theme because this audience had had little opportunity to create images of themselves or each other the way they wanted to be seen.

Additional strategies were used to engage students. Technical assignments in stop motion and blur allowed students to explore movement with the camera in the playground, allowing kinesthetic learning. They enjoyed group portrait sessions in which they pretended to be a music group, composing the cover of their CD, seeing themselves in new roles.

### STEP 3: WHAT WILL THE RESULT BE?

Keeping in mind the final project (e.g., exhibition) and the educational objectives (e.g., photographic skills, music appreciation) will help you plan your project and define your assessment criteria.

Educators wanted to create an opportunity for students to present their final portraits. Because of the partnership with Carnegie Hall, educators worked with Carnegie Hall designers to create posters of student photographs. The final posters visually illustrated what the students had learned about portraiture, rhythm, pattern, movement, and composition. One of the most exciting aspects of this final project was that the posters were six-feet tall and presented in street-level cases, providing the opportunity for a wide audience to see the students' work and to learn about this art education partnership.

Figure 26



## **STEP 4: ARTICULATE YOUR COURSE OVERVIEW.**

Flesh out exactly how you will meet your goals. You can then use a course overview to communicate with staff about what you want to do and what you need to make it happen.

### **Course Overview:**

In this 30-session program, ICP will teach photographic skills and the art of portraiture to 35 seventh graders and 35 eighth graders. Students will learn to visually communicate how they see themselves and the world around them. The class will examine the historical and contemporary aspects of portraiture through slide presentations and several guest artist visits. Student will learn camera handling and photographic techniques. Portraiture assignments include creating:

- portraits of each other in familiar settings of the classroom and playground
- group portraits for a book cover and a CD cover
- portraits of strangers in the school neighborhood
- portraits of people in another neighborhood around Carnegie Hall

Writing exercises will help students reflect upon what they have learned about photography.

The photography program will make a connection to the Carnegie Hall music program in various ways:

- focusing on concepts such as composition, movement, pattern, and rhythm
- making concrete connections such as creating CD covers
- listening to music while viewing images
- documenting the neighborhood around Carnegie Hall
- visiting the artists' studios within Carnegie Hall

The final outcome will be exhibition posters, representing at least one submission by each student.

## **STEP 5: MAKE A PROJECT PROPOSAL, CURRICULUM, TIMELINE, AND BUDGET.**

Once you have a sense of what kind of course works in your context and is appropriate to your audience, you need to define what you need to make it happen.

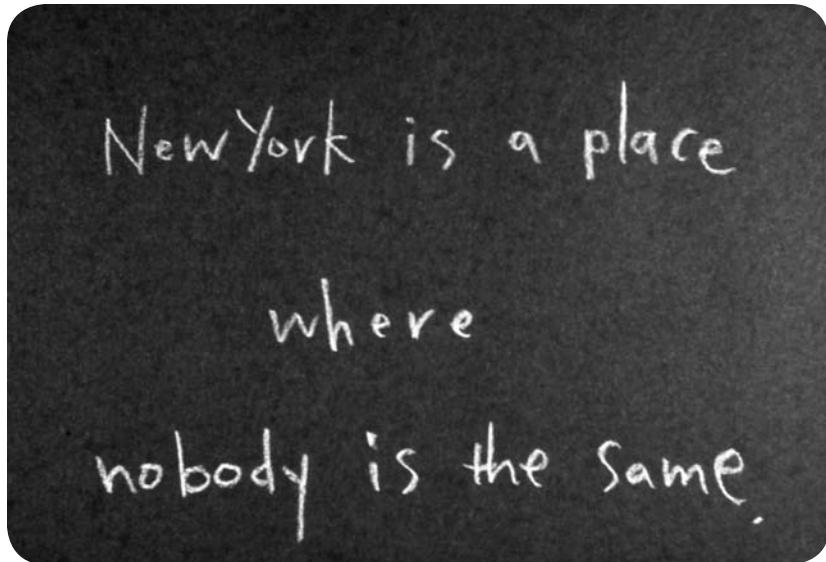
- The goals are to engage 70 middle school students in the art of portraiture and to make connections between photography and music.
- The educational objectives in photography are to teach camera handling, an understanding of lighting, and the elements of portraiture. The educational goals of the curriculum connection are to develop the students' understanding of the language of photography and the language of music, emphasizing the concepts of movement, pattern, rhythm, and most important, composition.
- The course theme is how art communicates and portrays our sense of the world and ourselves.
- The budget allows for 30 sessions, including 15 35mm cameras for use during class time, photographic shoots, lab processing, and guest artists' visits.
- The criteria for assessment are the realization of the portraits by students and their written reflections, which demonstrate skill mastery and visual vocabulary. Faculty also evaluate the students' personal growth, as shown by their motivation and attitude in class.
- The final project is an exhibition of four six-foot posters containing images by all the students, mounted in street-level cases at Carnegie Hall, with an opening reception and ribbon-cutting ceremony for students, staff, and families.
- The course will run from October 15 to May 15; the final exhibition will be produced in May and will run during New York City Arts Education Week.

Figure 27



# EDUCATORS' QUOTES

Figure 28



“

*Portrait Rhythms was a project in which the students did ‘street photography’ at Carnegie Hall and its external environment, the intersection of 57th Street and Seventh Avenue. The students were asked to make photographs that would portray ‘rhythm’ in the day-to-day life of a busy urban environment. While the Carnegie Hall program introduced the musical concepts of rhythm and beats, the photography program necessarily emphasized ‘action’ in photography as a concomitant of ‘rhythm.’ Action in this case ranged from the obvious motion of cars and taxis rushing by to the subtler motion of pedestrians’ gestures and changing traffic lights. The students’ skills in photography had already been prepared by studies in portraiture, followed by assignments aimed at making them aware of the relationships between shutter speeds, movement, stopped action, and blur. In the controlled environment of the school playground, they took pictures jumping and running and posing in groups. The practice at portraiture prepared them for the more difficult challenge of seeing things happen in a bigger field of activity. The busy atmosphere of midtown New York could be daunting, so there was a lot of advance thinking about the particular context in which they would be photographing, and we looked at many examples of photographic cityscapes from the history of photography before setting out to portray the area around Carnegie Hall.*

*Before our first excursion to photograph at Carnegie Hall, I asked the students to list things they imagined they would see that reflected street rhythms. Then I made slide texts out of their lists and interspersed them among slides of New York cityscape photographs by a range of noted photographers, and I chose Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue as an accompanying soundtrack. Their own remarks were presented anonymously so that the emphasis would be less on individuals at this point than simply on the concept of various points of view being expressed about the city. Later, after two visits to the site and a rigorous editing process, we made slides of the students' work and created a new slide show, still including the students' original lists of rhythms that they would anticipate. Of course, sometimes what students anticipated actually became photographs, but often they did not, and I liked leaving in the discrepancy to emphasize the difference in anticipation and experience. Also, I think that odd little discrepancies create more magic and less predictability, reminding them of the place subjectivity has in the process."*

Allen Frame, Photographer/ICP Instructor

Figure 29



# Working With Partners

If you are establishing a long-term project or multi-year program with a partnering organization, you need to understand who they are and what their goals are. A good partner demonstrates an ability to contribute and commit to the project (e.g., offering resources, being clear about roles, and being organized about communication). A partnership works best when each partner brings something different to the table. Otherwise, skills and expertise are duplicated, and administrative work is doubled, not streamlined. If you have difficulty communicating or defining roles then that might indicate a trouble area in the partnership, or that the two partners are too similar.

## Guiding questions:

- What are my organization's goals and expectations?
- What are the history and mission of the partner organization?
- Who are the key players?
- What are their goals and expectations for this project?
- Based on their nature, resources, and expertise, what will they bring to this project?
- What means of communication will this partnership use?
- How committed and organized are they in relation to this project?
- Is this organization the right partner for my organization's project ideas and goals?

## Managing the project: Communication and flexibility

When a long-term project is in action, the educational partners must communicate, discuss, and periodically review the project and its goals. Good communication ensures that all involved—staff, teachers, and students—are clear about the expectations and any changes in direction. Define partners' roles and establish a mode of communication early in the process. (Given busy schedules, this is easier said than done, but the effort toward good communication is crucial.)

If you are managing the project, then you need to communicate to all partners what they need to know. Teaching artists need to know what the educational objectives are, how many sessions they have, and what resources they have to work with in order to develop their lesson plans. They should tell the students what they need to know and what is expected of them. You may also be working with administrators who need reports on what happened. Track facts and figures, from student attendance to expenses, and observe classes periodically with your criteria in mind.

Planning meetings should take place before the project begins and then at critical junctures, such as the mid-point and before the final project. Meet with or speak on the phone with faculty biweekly. Make a brief outline of the project for distribution to administrators, partners, and teaching artists. Ask your partners questions to check what their understanding of the project is. Facilitate an open dialogue to direct the course and accommodate any needed changes in direction.

Managing a project is not about what you wrote on paper in the beginning but about how you steer the project based on your judgment and your partners' observations of its progress. You may need to rearrange the pattern of your "dominoes," but the dominoes themselves, the concepts—the what, why, and how of your project—should remain stable throughout. This will keep the project focused.

Most important, you need to create a teaching space that lets art happen. The curriculum follows from an understanding of the audience and how they are learning the material. Here is where the planning needs to allow for flexibility. You may need to devote more or less time to certain topics, or do an extra activity, take a domino out or put a domino in, allow a new pattern to emerge as long as the dominoes all connect. The final form of the project—whether it is an exhibition or publication—is often more clear once students have created images. Make sure your budget allows for change and growth. (For example, if you are considering two possible final projects, a newsletter or an exhibition, budget for the more costly option.)

# EDUCATORS' QUOTES

“

*Teaching is a collaborative process. It takes the commitment of the teachers, the students, their families, and the organizations that administrate the project. When each contributes to their role, the learning experience is most successful. The teacher must create an environment that nurtures trust and respect, both between the students and teachers and, more important, among the students themselves. The teacher must set achievable high standards for the class and clearly communicate those expectations, continually giving encouragement and positive critique. The students must come committed to learn and accepting the responsibility that participating in a community of equally committed individuals requires. It is the organization's role to steer the project it creates, defining its mission by giving support and guidance, encouraging excellence while accepting teacher innovation. The organization should be flexible enough within its guidelines to allow for creativity.*

*It is the family who has the most integral job. The family members are the ones who will be participating in the students' joy when they return home with the fruits of their labor. When the students are able to share their accomplishments with their family, they return to the class invigorated. In the real world these conditions rarely fall into place immediately. It is only after sustained efforts and willingness of all parties involved that the rewards will be achieved. In the meantime, it is the precious moments of wonder and joy that show on the face of the student that make the long road worth traveling.”*

Matthew Septimus, Photographer/ICP Instructor

# Working with Different Settings and Age Groups

Figure 30



Following are general observations relating to working with various age levels, based on projects that ICP has designed in partnership with schools and community centers. (See *Part 3* for specific case studies.)

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Don't underestimate this young audience because of their relatively short attention span. They are wonderfully creative and able learners, and the active art of photography will channel their energy. They can learn many techniques, both simple and complex, but it may take more sessions to teach them. Assess what their attention span is, and be clear about how many sessions you need to teach a certain technique. Integrate photography into a general theme and school philosophy. Younger audiences (grades K to 4) work well with simpler techniques such as Polaroid materials, automatic cameras, sun prints, and drawing and writing activities. With technique simplified, they enjoy more time and space for their imagination to play. In our yearlong In-School Partnerships with elementary schools, we found fifth- and sixth-grade students to be quite adept at complex technical-skills mastery: from black-and-white and color photography with manual 35mm cameras to alternative processes such as sun prints, pinhole photography, hand coloring prints, and Polaroid transfers.

## MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Curriculum connections work extremely well with this age group. ICP educators have found this age group to be particularly interested in portraiture and identity and to respond very well to thematic projects. They like to explore their own neighborhood but truly enjoy contrasting neighborhoods and cultures (and going on field trips) as they puzzle out self and community identity. Interactive activities and role playing are important ways to channel students' physical and emotional energy. Projects should be designed to connect to their lives as well as academics. Students with artistic promise and interest should be encouraged to develop a portfolio for application to a high school that is strong in the arts.

## HIGH SCHOOLS

Technical-skills mastery is the focus of this age group but with an interest in using these skills to reflect upon who they are and their emerging role in the world. Personal projects and portfolio development are valuable, open-ended ways to explore and reveal their individuality. Professional assignments help students bridge the gap between school and their next step (i.e., college, work). Contact with guest artists is particularly meaningful at this time when they are seeking role models in the "real world." Photography projects that tap into teenagers' need for connection to the real world and for individuality are naturally motivating. It is important to keep some freedom, surprise, and fun in the atmosphere, as this age group often feels pressure, especially in their senior year.

## COMMUNITY CENTERS

Whereas schools follow highly structured schedules, a community center is more flexible, and, therefore, the project design needs to accommodate that quality. Working on personal projects and portfolios enables students to learn at their own pace. In addition to the instructor, it is a good idea to involve many teaching assistants, as long as they are well-qualified, to guide students in a multi-level class. The teaching artist needs to construct flexible lesson plans, for example, conducting demonstrations not at the beginning of class but when a critical mass has appeared. Projects that center on the elements of a community or that respond to attributes of the center make sense in this context and draw people together.

## CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Cultural institutions usually have specific directives regarding their missions, their artistic media, and their expertise. Projects should center on artistic expertise and the high caliber of teaching artists and resources available. Students respond to the reality of this artistic experience and ultimately feel like they could become artists—which means they have opened up to what art can offer in their life, as opposed to just completing an academic assignment. In addition, partnering with a cultural institution introduces students and their families to the rich store of resources within their communities. This can help break down some of the boundaries between the organizations and the community and make art more accessible.

# EDUCATORS' QUOTES

“

*Elementary school is a wonderful age group—and perfect for teaching Polaroid with its ease of operation combined with instant feedback. We explored bird's-eye view, worm's-eye view, pattern and movement, simple geometric shapes in the world around them. After-school projects for this age group pose special challenges: fatigue, attention span, snack, birthday parties, focus, and attendance. All vary tremendously, so flexibility and the ability to improvise are essential to success.”*

Karen Lindsay, Photographer/ICP Teaching Associate

Following are the stories behind establishing two multi-year programs, one in partnership with a school and one with a community center.

# CASE STUDY

## IN-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Figure 31



### Program overview

ICP Community Record teaches photography to young people in partnership with schools throughout New York City in a year-round program, which includes hands-on instruction, classroom activities, guest artists' presentations, museum visits, and field trips in the neighborhood, resulting in a final project that celebrates the students' accomplishments. Each 30-session course is a combination of history, technique, aesthetics, and practice. Classes meet at the school once a week. ICP instructors conduct the photography course, in collaboration with school faculty, who are then able to reinforce topics and make connections to photography during the week. In the partnership, ICP manages the project and budget and incorporates photographic expertise into the curriculum, while the school handles logistics, contributes staff and space resources, and ensures that the project is appropriate for the school.

At the High School of Fashion Industries, the partners have developed a multi-tiered program that serves a model of integrating photography into the school setting. Since 2000, the photography program has offered: foundation classes integrated

into the school day for art majors (for credit); an after-school club for non-art majors, exploring all genres of photography; an advanced after-school class in practical applications from fashion photography to advertising; and teachers' workshops to explore curriculum connections and utilize the school's new photographic resources. The ICP-designed facility features a 15-station darkroom, separate film loading and processing area, print finishing area, and convertible studio in the classroom.

## Program history

Located in Chelsea, the High School of Fashion Industries (HSFI) is a vocational school that focuses on the field of fashion, design, and merchandizing. ICP courses, therefore, integrate basic photography skills with concepts in design and fashion.

In 1998, Arts Connection introduced ICP and HSFI, and in the first year, three partners worked together to establish the program concepts. A highly committed partner, HSFI dedicated classroom space to the photography facility, contributed and raised funds for the program, and hired a new art teacher with a strong background in photography.

Then in 1999, ICP launched a non-darkroom after-school club and a series of teachers' workshops while the darkroom was under development. These classes built enthusiasm for the photography program among the student body and the teachers, who were learning about the possibilities of integrating photography into their classroom projects. By pairing the ICP instructor with the HSFI art teacher during that year, the two staff members had time to develop a rapport and establish the basis of the collaboration. The facility was constructed over one year in collaboration with CoopTechnical High School, a vocational program whose construction class executed ICP's architectural plans.

### ICP Community Record at High School of Fashion Industries

The High School of Fashion Industries (HSFI) is a vocational school located in the Chelsea neighborhood.

**Audience:** High school students

**Collaborating staff:** ICP Coordinator of Community Programs Cynthia Way; ICP Deputy Director for Programs Phillip Block; Director of Arts Connection Steven Tennen; Deputy Director of Arts Connection Carol Morgan; Principal Charles Bonnici; Assistant Principal Madeleine Appell; Art Teacher Lisa Takoushian; Photography Instructor Curtis Willocks.

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.

Figure 32



Figure 33



## Program structure

In the 2000-2001 academic year, the classes focused on using the new darkroom facility. The teachers' workshops and after-school club continued. The after-school club attracted 70 students each semester for its 20 spots, indicating the need for expanded programming in 2001-2002. The HSFI faculty launched the foundation class, which met daily and incorporated photography into the design foundation class for art majors. The year's finale was an exhibition of student and faculty photographs in the school's gallery, as a way to inaugurate the program and highlight its accomplishments.

Several factors are key to the success of this in-school partnership:

- the school's contribution of time, space, staff, and funds
- the school's acknowledgement of photography as a credit class for art majors
- using teachers' workshops to emphasize ways to integrate photography into the classroom and capitalize upon the new photography facility
- offering various courses that enabled different types of students to participate—art and non-art majors, beginning and advanced students

## Curriculum connections

Teachers involved in workshops initiated a variety of connections to their curriculum areas. One social studies teacher demonstrated to his class how his own photographs illustrated the composition of the local neighborhood and other geographical areas the class had studied; then he encouraged students to use photographs in their reports and assignments. One English teacher had students write about images in two projects: (1) assembling an autobiography in words and pictures (from baby pictures to current portraits) and (2) using a picture by Diane Arbus as a starting point for a dramatic monologue written in the voice of the subject of the photograph. The guidance counselor used photographs of people in various professions to talk about career options. She also used photographs of people in abusive situations to provide a "safe" way for students to discuss their feelings.

# CASE STUDY

## COMMUNITY-BASED PARTNERSHIP

Figure 34



### Program history

Created in 1996, ICP at The Point is the result of an intensive partnership between the International Center of Photography (ICP) and The Point, a community development corporation, located in the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx.

ICP was interested in designing an on-site program with a fully equipped photography facility that offered a community the space and time to learn photography. In identifying a partner, ICP was especially drawn to The Point's unique combination of social service and the arts. The Point's mission is to use art as a stimulus for cultural renewal and enterprise in the Hunt's Point community and to encourage "self-investment" by its residents, especially its youth. The Point offers a variety of arts, enterprise, and environmental programs, and in its three main buildings provides a theater, dance studio, sound studio, radio station, Internet center, artist's studios, the ICP photography program, and a marketplace for emerging businesses.

Each partner offered different expertise: ICP designed and oversaw the educational component, the program design, and final projects; The Point ensured that the program met the needs of the community, recruited the audience, and managed the physical space. ICP was also designated as lead fundraiser and managed the budget.

In designing the program, ICP considered the best way to combine ICP's photographic expertise with the nature of a community center and the students' need for the program to seem unlike school.

Figure 35



First, a flexible workspace was created. In 1996, The Point's truck garage was renovated to create a photography facility. It features: a darkroom with nine enlarger stations, studio lighting equipment, a variety of camera formats, fiber printing capacity, a film processing lab, and a classroom that converts into a professional

### ICP at The Point

ICP at The Point is a community-based photography center, featuring a studio, darkroom facility, gallery, and business. The goal is to teach photography in the community as a way to foster creative expression, communication skills, and professional experience.

**Audience:** Local community, ages 8 to adult

**Collaborating Staff:** ICP Coordinator of Community Programs Cynthia Way; Associate Director of The Point Maria Torres; ICP Deputy Director for Programs Phillip S. Block; and Executive Director of The Point Paul Lipson.

Funding for this program was provided by Art+Commerce, Altman Foundation, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, Ethel & Irvin Edelman Foundation, Bernard F. and Alva B. Gimbel Foundation, Mary A. Goodman, Charles Hayden Foundation, William Randolph Hearst Foundation, Dorothea Leonhardt Fund of the Communities Foundation of Texas, The Edward S. Moore Foundation, Open Society Institute, The Pinkerton Foundation, Surda Foundation, and the Harold Roth Fund for Young Photographers.

studio. Students learn in a dynamic atmosphere in which many activities happen simultaneously: instruction in camera handling, film processing, and printing. This type of individualized instruction is possible because of the number of faculty, teaching assistants, and volunteers, a 1 to 3 teacher-student ratio. Because the program emphasizes individualized hands-on instruction, participants learn at their own pace—from the instructor and each other—and create portfolios that express their personal vision.

Taught by leading professional photographers, multi-level classes in photography are offered free to young people after school and to adults at an affordable tuition on weekends. The first courses began in the spring of 1997 and have continued with good

Figure 36



enrollment, involving some of ICP's best teaching artists: Allen Frame, Frank Franca, Karen Furth, Deborah Klesenski, Dona Ann McAdams, Matthew Septimus, and Curtis Willocks. After the first year, the partners created an annual publication to chronicle the program's activities and highlight student accomplishments. In January 2000, the partners opened the Vantage Point Gallery in The Point's main atrium to showcase student photographs. By 2001, ICP at The Point had achieved its goal of establishing a solid program structure and had developed enough advanced students to set the foundation for a student-run business.

## Program structure

ICP at The Point explores both the creative possibilities and practical applications of the medium. The courses cover the history, techniques, aesthetics, and practices of the medium, all within the context of individualized projects that connect to the students' lives and interests. Classes focus on developing each student's technical skills and artistic vision through the completion of portfolios and projects. For example, instructors motivate students to develop personal projects, document dance performances, take portraits of families and models, photograph for annual report assignments, and create images of their own neighborhood. In the lab, students process their film and print their pictures. Guest artists share their work experiences and photography projects with the class. Visits to museums, galleries, and businesses in New York City reveal the aesthetic and professional aspects of the field.

Figure 37



## Practical applications and projects

The program provides various venues for the presentation of student imagery. In this way, students are rewarded for their accomplishments at the same time that they learn about the use of photographs in print, media, exhibition, fine art, and professional work. These projects also set up an exchange of imagery with the community.

**Portfolios:** Portfolio development is the ongoing project emphasized in every class. Each student's portfolio reveals his or her developing personal style and traces their progress in different genres. Students learn to edit and sequence their portfolios to illustrate their skill and vision to a potential client.

Figure 38



**Vantage Point Gallery:** With expert guidance, students create and edit photographs for exhibition, and they learn to curate and install exhibitions three times a year.

**Annual Publication:** The ICP at The Point publication traces the evolution of the program and highlights students' accomplishments and portfolios.

**Monthly Newspaper:** Hunt's Point Alive!, The Point's monthly newspaper, features a centerfold of students' photographs and invites photographers to create work on assignment, documenting local events in the neighborhood and the news at The Point.

**The Archive:** A collection of each student's best imagery and a safe storage place for their work, the archive is an ongoing project for students and staff. Student photographs are a valuable insider's glimpse into lives and a community often misrepresented by outsiders. Clients interested in publishing or exhibiting student work can draw upon the resources of the archive.

**Business:** The business class teaches students how to become professional photographers by working together on real assignments, from family portraiture to actors' head shots to annual reports. The class has also helped students to attain positions working as printing technicians in major photo labs.

**Career Development:** As students progress in the study of photography, they become eligible for job opportunities assisting with the classes, the lab, the business, and gallery exhibitions. Students have contact with professional photographers, museum professionals, and other talented artists, all of whom are committed to guiding students to discover their potential and to explore the field.

Figure 39



# STUDENTS' QUOTES

“

*In the past four years, The Point has played a very large part of the success in my life. I considered The Point a guide, adviser, and most of all a friend. Everyone there has such compassion about everything they do. They dedicate their lives and hearts to the type of art that they love and provide inspiration for young nurturing minds such as myself.*

*At ICP at The Point, I was able to discover a love for photography that I would have never had if it wasn't for some ICP's instructors by the names of Dona Ann McAdams and Frank Franca, who put their trust and a camera into the hands of a complete stranger. They taught me the basics of photography. I learned that the core of a good image is lighting. The way you use your light source is very important to an image. It also tells a lot about the photographer's creativity.*

*I thank ICP and The Point and all who are responsible for supporting my wishes and dreams.”*

Eboni Peartree, 18, ICP at The Point Student

“

*I have been going to ICP at The Point for two years now. When I first got here, I knew a lot about photography, but ICP taught me a lot about medium format and also different techniques with a 35mm camera. Now I'm the Assistant Lab Manager, and I'm teaching kids, teens, and adults about photography. I like to take pictures of fashion in the studio and street photography. ICP at the Point is a great opportunity to learn about photography with great professional photographers.”*

Jason Tirado, 17, ICP at The Point Student

# EDUCATORS' QUOTES



*“It is important to keep a keen eye on what makes students’ work unique, and to help them see that for themselves. Because our program has students that range in age from 13 to 24, and because their level of experience ranges from 4 years to 3 weeks, it is extremely important to engage all of them on an individual basis, almost like a tutor. Not all students will volunteer to show me their work, and so I must ask to see it. Not all students will admit they are having problems coming up with new projects, and so I must scratch the surface and make suggestions. Occasionally this gives our class the kaleidoscopic appearance of a three-ring circus: a studio shoot, a printing session, students developing film, portfolio reviews, a community shoot, students learning history and technique from books, colorizing black-and-white photos. At the same time, it gives our classes a sense of the dynamism and excitement that is absolutely imperative when dealing with the attention spans of young people. I try to teach students to apply the critical eye that an artist brings to anything he or she sees. I do this by dissecting contemporary images and speaking in great detail about a particular image (published or their own). Not only does this teach them about photography, but also it gives them a language to describe their own work.”*

Frank Franca, Photographer/ICP Instructor



## **FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY: A CURRICULUM GUIDE**

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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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# 6

## Meeting Educational Goals

### OVERVIEW

This chapter presents ways to assess student progress, evaluate photographic education projects, and meet educational standards.

Figure 40



## Using Assessment and Evaluation as a Guide

Curricula represent our best intentions. Then, there is what actually happens. Students hit stumbling blocks. They take longer to learn than estimated. Or, they create from the heart and take the course in a more personal direction. To address a need, you overspend in one category in the budget and cannot do what was originally planned in another area. A technical glitch, such as ordered equipment not arriving in time, calls for an alternate plan. Or, you have an inspiration midway and change the course.

A good curriculum is a road map that allows for change and problem solving. Keep extra activities in a bag of tricks for each lesson. Continually try to gauge how your students are responding and learning. Reflecting upon student progress and curriculum structure, not just at the end of the course but throughout, can help you to meet the various educational goals—your teaching goals, the students' interests, and the organization's standards.

When working in a school, educators must assess student progress and evaluate the course in light of national and local educational standards. In general, assessment refers to looking critically at student work, and evaluation regards the course or project. Matching student assessment and educational standards can be tricky: How can you grade a student's photograph, for example? But, without seeing evidence of student progress, how can you evaluate the effectiveness of your course? Often, assessment is seen as a scary word in the arts: It involves judgment, the silent killer of the artistic process. Just as art can become strained and wily when you heft rigid expectations and concepts upon the process, so can art education.

Yet, assessment and evaluation are valuable tools for informing and improving curriculum and instruction. As measures, they help determine how well goals have been met. As prompts for reflection, they help you to understand what worked and what could be done better next time. And, as a record of the course, they provide a way for you to share your students' success with others. One way to think about it is to see assessment and evaluation as questioning where you are and where you are heading.

Throughout the course, ask yourself questions about where your students are in their photographic skills and determine what they need to advance. Ask yourself what is coming across well and why students are not connecting to some material. What types of activities engage these students best? What skills do the students need in order to grow as photographers? What type of instruction will help them get there? At the end of the course, the form of the final project becomes apparent. You may have planned for an exhibition, a book, or a Web site, and each of these venues requires different types of final selections. Now the class needs to edit the work to meet the criteria for the final project; this actively engages them in assessment of their own work. A culminating project such as an art opening not only shows others that the course met educational goals, but also it is an occasion to celebrate the students' first steps as artists.

The resulting artwork tells the story of the course. Compare the beginning work with the end results. This form of assessment reveals the educational impact of photography best; after all, art is essentially about reflection and the re-presentation of ideas. Use the photographic art itself as the assessment tool: The proof is in the gelatin.

## Means of Assessment and Evaluation

To meet your educational goals and to communicate with others—project directors, funders, parents, and other educators—about educational benefits of your course, you need to use various means of assessment and evaluation. The following examples describe what you can use for both student assessment and project evaluation goals, noted as follows:

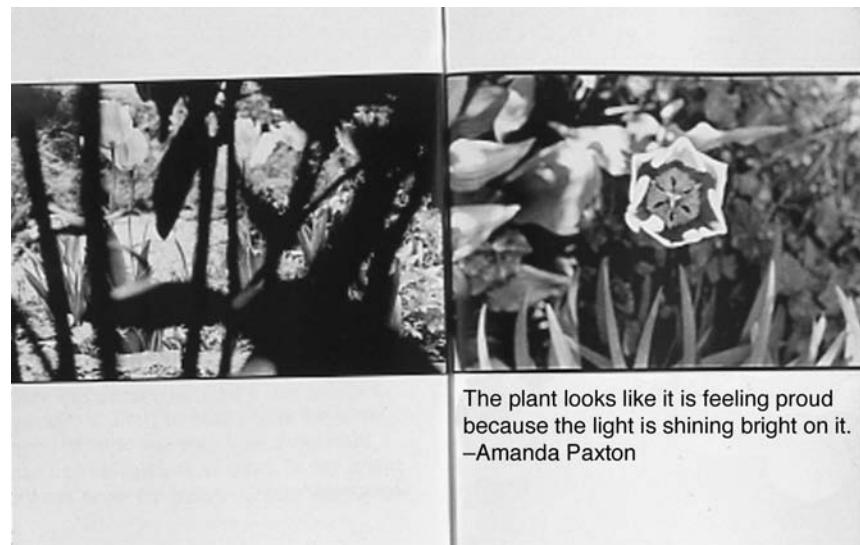
- Student assessment (SA), how well students have met learning goals
- Project evaluation (PE), how well the project has met curricular and organizational goals

Figure 41



- **Portfolios** and **final projects** such as exhibitions are the best way to assess student progress and evaluate the end result of the course. The portfolios or final projects should represent the best images and show the range of work covered. They also demonstrate how well students understood the topic. To see how much students have progressed, you can compare artwork from the beginning and end of the course. Culminating projects provide an opportunity to tie together what the course covered and showcase what students achieved. (Note: Make sure you keep copies or copy slides of the final projects for project evaluation, public relations, and funding purposes.) SA, PE
- **Artwork** illustrates how well students have learned techniques and aesthetics. Looking at their successes and bloopers during class assignments can help you determine if you need to review certain concepts and techniques or if you can move on to other topics. The final images—and the way students discuss or write about them—can reveal how their approach to making art has evolved. (Note: During the course, it is a good idea to have students make two copies of their best prints and store them in an archive box in the classroom. Ask students to put their names on their work.) SA, PE

Figure 42



The plant looks like it is feeling proud because the light is shining bright on it.  
—Amanda Paxton

- **Contact sheets** provide a good checkpoint to monitor students' progress during a course and their performance on an assignment. A contact sheet is a map of seeing; it reveals how a photographer thinks visually. Look for how students are approaching subject matter: if they are exploring point of view, taking more than one picture of a subject, and using a variety of techniques. Consider how well they focused on the assignment. Evaluate how well they are mastering techniques like exposure, focus, lighting, and framing. This can guide you to structure the next activity based on how students are responding and learning. SA

Figure 43



- **Discussions** about artwork reveal how well students are learning photographic terms and developing a vocabulary to talk about art. Ask them specific, guiding questions and pay attention to their language use. (For more information on what to look for in students' language, see *Part I, Chapter 3: Visual Literacy*.) SA
- **Journals** can document the effects of the course from the students' viewpoint. Journals that include both images and text can chronicle students' evolving approaches to art-making. Their images can show what ideas and techniques are important to them, and their writing can show how they have been thinking about art. (Note: At the end of the course, you can ask students for permission to copy selected pages for more public project assessment purposes, but the journal should remain a safe space for exploration during the class.) SA, PE

Figure 44



- **Worksheets** and **writing assignments** can indicate how well students are learning photographic terms, vocabulary, and concepts. These are not “tests,” but rather an opportunity to respond to photography through writing. The process of writing can clarify students’ understanding of photographic concepts. Their written responses make their thinking visible to themselves and others. For students who are not able to write well, these assignments can build writing skills, but also you can have students talk about their responses to the worksheets together. SA, PE

Figure 45



When I saw the dog yawning so big, I knew it was the right picture for me. I clicked the camera just in time.  
—Daniel Davis

- **Problem-solving skills** often are demonstrated as students work on hands-on photographic assignments either independently or with peers. You can see how well students work with the camera, the lights, or the chemistry. In addition, you can observe how well students work with others, respond to feedback, deliver constructive comments, and express their emotions and thoughts. This can indicate what students are learning and how they are growing as individuals. The development of their thinking and communication skills is an important benefit of arts education. SA
- **Documenting activities** throughout the course, either with still cameras or a video camera, provides a valuable record of students at work and may reveal some of the excitement and impact of photographic education. (Note: You should ask students if you can use pictures of them publicly for project evaluation purposes.) PE

Figure 46



- **Curriculum, lesson plans**, and any **handouts** illustrate how the teaching was accomplished. These materials not only provide a record that tells the story of the course but also are a starting point for the next time you teach. PE
- **Course evaluations** by students convey their personal reactions and empower them to grade the course for a change! In addition, sometimes students give “thank you” notes and images to guest artists who had a strong impact on them. SA, PE
- **Classroom environment** can show the progress of the class, and student work can be displayed in any kind of container: an image box, a portfolio file, “newspaper clipping of the week” or “image of the week” posted on bulletin boards, and images with writing in exhibition cases. SA, PE

Lastly, finding a way to share your story about the photography project can offer other educators inspiration, practical tips, valuable resources, and ideas for collaborating. (Contact ICP’s Education Department to share your project ideas.)

# How Photographic Education Meets National and Local Standards

To assess student progress in a school-based course or project, educators need to bear in mind national and local standards for visual art specific to their grade level. The following two sections describe how photographic education can meet national and local standards. This can help you to plan your curriculum, define criteria and means of assessment and evaluation, and communicate about your success to others.

When a curriculum incorporates history, technique, aesthetics and practice, photographic education meets the national and local standards for visual arts education (see *Part II, Chapter 4: Teaching the Basics*). Balancing this combination is key. Without a connection to art history, for example, you will have difficulty meeting at least half the national standards for visual art (e.g., standards 3, 4, and 6 on page 75). Importantly, seeing and discussing good examples informs a photographer's technical growth, and this focus on craft also meets national standards (e.g., standards 1 and 2). In addition, allowing time for students to reflect on images is critical. Without it, you will have difficulty meeting standards calling for an understanding of the merits of work (e.g., standard 5). Moreover, students will not grow as photographers unless they reflect upon and are aware of the choices they are making. This is why the basic sequence for lessons, described in *Part II, Chapter 4*, has proven effective for ICP educators. The sequence allows time for: (1) instruction, when teaching artists impart their knowledge and passion for the medium; (2) practice, when students are free to create images and experiment as artists; and (3) reflection, when students and teachers respond to the photograph through discussion or other artistic media to uncover the many ways the photograph communicates its message. In this way, students are continually learning new information, creating images, and responding to images.

## Meeting national standards

Below each national standard, you will find comments on what students learn in various photographic activities. This can help you see what your course should cover to meet the standards. Consider how the skills and activities described are part of a balanced curriculum in photography (see *Part II, Chapter 4*).

---

## National Standards for Visual Arts Education, Grades K-12

- 1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
  - 2 Using knowledge of structures and functions
  - 3 Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
  - 4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
  - 5 Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others
  - 6 Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines
- 

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(Retrieved June 1, 2004: <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards.cfm>)

### *Standard 1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes*

- To create photographs, students must know how to operate the camera, make an exposure, focus, use lighting, and frame the picture.
- In a darkroom-based class, students learn about chemistry (dilutions and ratios), timing, and proper handling of materials.
- To edit photographs, students need to have a clear idea of what they want to say and an understanding of how the photograph communicates.
- In assembling a final project, students draw together and apply what they have learned to present final slides, exhibitions, or printed materials using photography.

### *Standard 2: Using knowledge of structures and functions*

- To discuss and create photographs, students need to understand what a photograph is, how it is made, and what its elements are.
- Students demonstrate their knowledge when they complete assignments, portfolios, and class projects.

### *Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas*

- Students choose from a diverse range of genres, styles, applications, and subject matter when they create and discuss photographs.
- Students develop the ability to communicate their ideas through photography in hands-on activities, assignments, and final projects.
- Students appreciate the many possible interpretations of a photograph when discussing their own work and others'.

### *Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures*

- Students gain an understanding of the history and cultural impact of photography as they discuss and view historical and contemporary artwork, visit galleries and museums, and meet with guest artists.
- Assignments and projects can relate to historical and cultural studies.

**Standard 5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others**

- Students write reflections on their own images, create journals, and write or draw creatively in response to photographs.
- Students critique their own and their classmates' photographs in class.
- Students discuss the qualities of historical and contemporary photographs in slide presentations, gallery visits, and guest artist presentations.

**Standard 6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines**

- Class projects can make connections between photography and other disciplines such as social studies and English language arts. (See *Part III, Chapter 9: Making Curriculum Connections*.)

In addition, digital imaging projects can meet national educational technology standards. (See *Part III, Chapter 16: Photography & Digital Imaging*.)

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**National Educational Technology Foundation Standards for Students**

**Standard 1: Basic operations and concepts**

- Students demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature and operation of technology systems.
- Students are proficient in the use of technology.

**Standard 2: Social, ethical, and human issues**

- Students understand the ethical, cultural, and societal issues related to technology.
- Students practice responsible use of technology systems, information, and software.
- Students develop positive attitudes toward technology uses that support lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.

**Standard 3: Technology productivity tools**

- Students use technology tools to enhance learning, increase productivity, and promote creativity.
- Students use productivity tools to collaborate in constructing technology-enhanced models, prepare publications, and produce other creative works.

**Standard 4: Technology communications tools**

- Students use telecommunications to collaborate, publish, and interact with peers, experts, and other audiences.
- Students use a variety of media and formats to communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences.

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(Retrieved June 1, 2004: [http://cnets.iste.org/students/s\\_stands.html](http://cnets.iste.org/students/s_stands.html))

*Standard 1: Basic operations and concepts*

- In digital imaging projects, students learn the basic technological operations involved in using the camera, downloading the images into the computer, and altering the images using computer software.

*Standard 2: Social, ethical, and human issues*

- Educators can design projects in which students work in teams, address social and ethical issues, and reflect upon the impact of technology on their lives as they discuss, create, and produce digital images.

*Standard 3: Technology productivity tools*

- When fine-tuning and altering digital images or adding other media such as writing or digital video, students are using advanced knowledge of technology tools to produce creative artworks that communicate their thoughts and feelings.

*Standard 4: Technology communications tools*

- When students create a Web site or online portfolio, they are using technology to publish and share their work with others.

## Meeting local standards

Photographic education can support state standards for the arts as well as for academic disciplines. Below each standard are some ways that ICP photography projects (fully described in *Part III*) have met the New York State standards in the arts, social studies, and English language arts. This can help you see how a specific project connects to a standard. Consider how closely these examples relate to the national standards and to your local setting.

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### New York State Standards for the Arts

#### *Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts*

- Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts.

#### *Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources*

- Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles.

#### *Standard 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art*

- Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.

#### *Standard 4: Understanding the Cultural Contributions of the Arts*

- Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

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New York State Academy for Teaching and Learning

(Retrieved June 1, 2004: <http://www.nysatl.nysesd.gov/artstand.html>)

***Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts***

- In Portrait Rhythms, students learned about two art forms, music and photography. Through creating individual and group portraits, some of which were rendered into CD covers, students gained an understanding of the language of photography and the language of music. Students focused on concepts common to both media: movement, pattern, rhythm, and most important, composition. Finally, students created an exhibition of their artwork, displayed in six-foot tall posters in street-level cases by Carnegie Hall. (See *Part II, Chapter 5: Strategies for Developing Projects*.)

***Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources***

- In the photo/theater projects, students mastered camera handling, studio lighting, and the arrangement of a set with models and props as they played the roles of photographer, model, and lighting technician to create images, or “historical fictions.” (See *Part III, chapters, 10, 11, and 13*.)
- In documentary photography projects, students learned how to operate a camera, work with available lighting, and compose an image to communicate what they wanted to say. As they edited their resulting images, they made further decisions as to which images communicate better than others and even how to sequence a series of images into a more complex commentary on a neighborhood or situation. Many ICP projects included the art of documentary photography. (See *Part II, Chapter 7: Documentary Photography Projects*.)

***Standard 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art***

- In addition to discussing historical and contemporary artwork and meeting with guest artists to learn about artistic approaches, students edited their images and wrote reflections in many ICP projects. (See *Part III, Chapter 14: Photography & Writing* for specific exercises.)

***Standard 4: Understanding the Cultural Contributions of the Arts***

- Students gained an understanding of the artistic legacy and rich history of their local neighborhood through reading historical accounts, viewing historical and contemporary pictures of the area, and creating their own images describing local cultural traditions. Students’ perception of their neighborhood expanded from familiar terrain to a place where other artists have worked and lived. (See *Part III, Chapter 12: Photography & Multicultural Education*.)
- Students learned how photography works in relation to other artistic media (from writing to sculpture) through the series of projects in Re-Visions of El Barrio. (See *Part III, Chapter 15: Photography & Other Art Media*.)

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## New York State Standards for Social Studies

### *Standard 1: History of the United States and New York*

- Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

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New York State Academy for Teaching and Learning  
(Retrieved June 1, 2004: <http://www.nysatl.nysesd.gov/ssstand.html>)

### *Standard 1: History of the United States and New York*

- Students learned about the Second World War through viewing and discussing images from the time period, listening to guest artists share their war-time experiences, and creating staged images, “historical fictions,” that expressed their understanding. (See *Part III, Chapter 10: Photography & History*.)
- Students learned about the history of immigration in New York City by reading historical material and visiting local sites, and they expressed their understanding through creating pictures and writing the stories of immigrants’ experiences. (See *Part III, Chapter 11: Photography & Social Studies*.)

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## New York State Standards for English Language Arts

### *Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding*

- Students will listen, speak, read, and write for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language to acquire, interpret, apply, and transmit information.

### *Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression*

- Students will read and listen to oral, written, and electronically produced texts and performances from American and world literature; relate texts and performances to their own lives; and develop an understanding of the diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions the texts and performances represent. As speakers and writers, students will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language for self-expression and artistic creation.

### *Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation*

- Students will listen, speak, read, and write for critical analysis and evaluation. As listeners and readers, students will analyze experiences, ideas, information, and issues presented by others using a variety of established criteria. As speakers and writers, they will use oral and written

language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language to present, from a variety of perspectives, their opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information and issues.

**Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction**

- Students will listen, speak, read, and write for social interaction. Students will use oral and written language that follows the accepted conventions of the English language for effective social communication with a wide variety of people. As readers and listeners, they will use the social communications of others to enrich their understanding of people and their views.

---

New York State Academy for Teaching and Learning  
(Retrieved June 1, 2004: <http://www.nysatl.nysesd.gov/engstand.html>)

**Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding**

- In many ICP projects, students read a variety of technical photography texts, learned photographic and artistic vocabulary, and demonstrated their knowledge in class discussions and written reflections. (See *Part III, Chapter 14: Photography & Writing* for a range of exercises that tap into these language skills.)

**Standard 2: Language for Literary Response and Expression**

- Students gained a deeper understanding of the play *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansbury as they created images based on the characters and situation. (See *Part III, Chapter 13: Photography & Literature*.)
- Students learned to express their cultural identity through images and poetry in the Re-Visions of El Barrio project. (See *Part III, Chapter 15: Photography & Other Art Media*.)

**Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation**

- In many ICP projects, students shared their opinions of classmates' artwork during editing sessions. (See **Focus Link 43** for criteria used in discussing and editing photographs. Also, see *Part III, Chapter 14: Photography & Writing* for a range of exercises that tap into analytical language skills.)

**Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction**

- Students built communication skills as they interviewed classmates, teachers, family, and community members in the immigration project: Who Are We and Where Do We Come From? (See *Part III, Chapter 11: Photography & Social Studies*.)
- By discussing photographs that describe different cultures and deal with critical issues, such as race and identity, students developed stronger communications skills and learned to appreciate the various perspectives that their peers, teachers, and artists have. (See *Part III, chapters 12, 15*.)

## Applying the standards

While applying the standards to an art education project can seem daunting, it can also strengthen your curriculum. The following steps and chart show how you can put all the pieces together.

This example is based on a project combining photography and social studies, in which students created stories about the experiences of immigrants coming to America. (See the case study in *Part III, Chapter 11: Photography & Social Studies*.)

### BASIC STEPS

#### 1 LIST THE COURSE OBJECTIVES

For example:

- A** Learn beginning photography skills, including (1) camera handling, (2) lighting, (3) composition, (4) artistic vocabulary
- B** Create a final project using studio set up and storytelling
- C** Complement social studies class's focus on immigration

#### 2 LIST THE STANDARDS THAT APPLY (REVIEW THIS CHAPTER FOR IDEAS.)

For example: state standard 1 for social studies; national and state standards for visual arts.

#### 3 LIST THE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

For example:

- A** Photography Skills
  - 1) Students can make good exposures using a manual camera.
  - 2) Students can use lighting equipment.
  - 3) Students approach subject matter from different points of view and experiment with angles.
  - 4) Students have learned technical terms and discuss classmates' work with constructive language.

- B** Final Project

- 1) Students participate in the creation of a final project.
  - 2) Students can create images using a studio lighting set up and can make choices that show they can use photographs to tell stories.

- C** Curriculum Connection

Students have a deeper understanding of the experiences of immigrants coming to America.

#### 4 NOTE THE WAYS YOU INTEND TO MEET THESE CRITERIA

(Review this chapter for ideas.)

For example:

**A** Photography Skills

- 1) Artwork: Examine prints for consistent exposures
- 2) Problem solving: Observe use of equipment during shoots
- 3) Contact sheets: Examine contact sheets for approaches to subject matter
- 4) Journals, writing, discussions: Observe language use in journals, reflective writing, and editing sessions

**B** Final Project & **C**: Curriculum Connection

Produce final project of historical fictions telling stories in pictures about immigrants' experiences coming to America (meets state standard 1 for social studies; national and state standards for visual art)

Course objectives	Educational goals	Assessment and evaluation criteria	Means of assessment and evaluation
<p><u>A. Photography Skills</u> Learn beginning photography skills: 1. camera handling 2. lighting 3. composition 4. artistic vocabulary</p>	<p><u>A: Photography Skills</u> Meets national standards for visual art</p> <p>Meets state standards for art</p>	<p><u>A: Photography Skills</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students can make good exposures using a manual camera.</li><li>2. Students can use lighting equipment.</li><li>3. Students approach subject matter from different points of view and experiment with angles.</li><li>4. Students have learned technical terms and discuss classmates' work with constructive language.</li></ol>	<p><u>A: Photography Skills</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Artwork: Examine prints for consistent exposures</li><li>2. Problem solving: Observe use of equipment during shoots</li><li>3. Contact sheets: Examine contact sheets for approaches to subject matter</li><li>4. Journals, writing, discussions: observe language use in journals, reflective writing, and editing sessions</li></ol>
<p><u>B. Final Project</u> Create a final project using studio set-up and storytelling</p>	<p><u>B: Final Project</u> Meets national standards for visual art</p> <p>Meets state standards for art</p>	<p><u>B. Final Project</u></p> <p>Students participate in the creation of a final project. Students can create images using a studio lighting set up and can make choices that show they can use photographs to tell stories.</p>	<p><u>B. Final Project</u></p> <p>Produce final project of historical fictions telling stories in pictures about immigrants' experiences coming to America</p>
<p><u>C: Curriculum Connection</u> Complement social studies class's focus on immigration</p>	<p><u>C: Curriculum Connection</u> Meets state standard 1 for social studies</p>	<p><u>C: Curriculum Connection</u></p> <p>Students have a deeper understanding of the experiences of immigrants coming to America.</p>	<p><u>C: Curriculum Connection</u></p> <p>Produce final project of historical fictions telling stories in pictures about immigrants' experiences coming to America</p>

In addition to making a curriculum connection that meets the state standard 1 for social studies, this example's final project meets the national and New York State standards for visual art. To create final pictures in the photo/theater activity, students must know how to operate cameras, use lighting, and compose pictures containing people and props to communicate their stories about immigration (national standards 1, 2, and 3; state standards 1 and 2). The activity itself is high-energy, challenging, and engaging as students perform various roles—photographer, model, set designer, and lighting technician (state standard 1).

This project ties together all the concepts and techniques students have learned throughout the course (national standard 2; state standards 1 and 2). Editing the resulting pictures draws upon what students have learned about how historical and contemporary photographs tell stories; it engages students in a critical discussion about which images work together best for their immigration project (national standards 4, 5, and 6; state standards 3 and 4).

Most important, the final project taps into students' personal resources—their experiences and identity—and develops their sense of who they are in the world. The culminating display of images acknowledges their accomplishments in a public forum, and students are thrilled to see themselves—not only as various characters in the images—but also as artists.

Means of assessment and evaluation are powerful communication tools about what made your course successful. By assessing student progress and evaluating your course effectively, you can improve your instruction, positively affect student learning; enhance an organization's approach to curriculum development, communicate with the public about student accomplishments, document your work, share your success story with fellow educators, and even build community pride.

# STUDENTS' QUOTES

“

*I always imagined myself doing something in the arts. I picked up a camera for the first time three months ago. I like to put things together. I lie in bed and get images. I want to create those images, and photography is a great way to do it, probably the only way. When I get an image, I write it down and then I go and shoot it. I like printing because it's a rush. When you are in the darkroom, you get excited because you don't always know how the picture will turn out.”*

Priscilla Lopez, 17, ICP at The Point Student

“

*Art needs creativity, pride, feeling. But what it really needs is a piece of you. And it needs to touch the audience. It needs perfection, and it needs drama, real life, and aspirations. It needs to be personal. I wish that others had the same opportunities as I had, you know, having this class. I really like photography. Thank you.”*

Lillian Martinez, 18, ICP at The Point Student

“

*I learned that light means a lot to photography and that speed is needed to make good pictures, and I learned new words to spell like shutter, aperture, camera, image, and depth of field. I liked that we got work hands on with the camera and experience real photography and not just being told how its done and not doing it.”*

Abby Rivera, 10, The Earth School Student

# EDUCATORS' QUOTES



“ Most of the fifth-grade students at The Earth School appeared to have learned that they are in control of any photographic process and that this control is characterized by both responsibility (adherence to certain rules) and occasional freedom from that responsibility (and those rules). They developed creative confidence and became less concerned about taking risks.”

Christopher Spinelli, Artist/Teaching Assistant

“ Image making is a wonderful equalizer and particularly positive for the students with academic challenges or social interaction issues. So much classroom teaching is aimed at the average student, especially in large classes: ‘teaching to the middle.’ One of the joys of teaching photography is that you can reach to the extremes both ends of the spectrum as well as the average student:

- Bright students who are ready to work independently can use the extra challenge and opportunity to explore and create original work.
- Struggling students who are isolated socially or by language, culture, or ability can experience success and create strong work.

*It is also nice to know that you are offering something that can provide some direction in a child’s life, the choices of a high-school job or after-school activity, the newspaper, yearbook, and many positive experiences and memories.*

*Photographic education becomes a reason to come to school for many students and for this teacher, especially when you walk into school and a student says, ‘Do we have photography today?’, accompanied by a big smile and a welcome.”*

Karen Lindsay, Photographer/ICP Teaching Associate



*One tool that I use to make photography personal is the journal. It gives the student the ability to write about their images and produce images about their writings. This gets students thinking about putting not one image but many images together with words. Some journals are just pure visual language, but the most effective ones add text, two forms of communication. We all have a lot to say.”*

Curtis Willocks, Photographer/ICP Instructor



## **FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY: A CURRICULUM GUIDE**

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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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# 7 Documentary Photography Projects

## OVERVIEW

This chapter discusses how documentary photography engages students and presents sample curriculum for darkroom, non-darkroom, digital imaging, and other activities.

Figure 47

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## Teaching the Documentary Statement

Teaching young people to document their community may be one of the most powerful and revealing projects in photographic education. In their images, students show us how they see their world.

Rather than watching their lives and community depicted in the media or by others, this is their chance to say what they see. In taking hold of their lives within the camera frame, they are building, image by image, a more confident sense about their connection to the world. Like a visual index, their images reveal who they are and where they are.

The key is to teach students how to use the camera and then let them freely express their observations of the community.

Figure 48



Figure 49



This process is as natural and immediate to them as sight. And yet, it changes their perception of their world. Walking through the neighborhood with a camera in hand changes the experience of the same route they travel every day. With photography, they can capture, reflect, and imagine. In the afternoon light, the bridge looks composed

Figure 50



Figure 51



of angles, lines, circles, and shadows; it has beauty. Suddenly, the street is filled with motion that can be blurred or stopped mid-air; the young photographers have a measure of control over their environment. What do they want to say about it? What's going to happen next? Their neighborhood, while familiar, now has more possibilities. Others have photographed it before. The neighborhood has a visual past, present, and future, of which these young photographers are part.

Documentary photography, and its cousin photojournalism, are the great storytellers and spies of the medium. They endeavor to show things as they are. They call upon the aspect of the camera as observer, an objective eye pointed toward the world. While documentary photography is an effort to record the way things are, either in a single image of a situation or an extended series on a topic, photojournalism is an effort to explain the way things are and often needs many images in sequence and perhaps text to tell the story. Topics range from light to dark, from documentary photographs of people at work and at play to difficult situations that call for change.

Bear in mind as you discuss images with students that there are many issues related to the ability of documentary photography and photojournalism to record "how things are." Each photographer has a different perspective, and, therefore, each will render a different photograph on the same topic. Because of photography's attributes of point of view, framing, and cropping, when we look at a photograph we see a selection, a slice of life, as seen through a particular photographer's lens. Documentary photographers use the aesthetics and techniques of photography to communicate; therefore, their visual statements, however objective they may seem, are still artful representations. Sometimes, because the image is so clear or truthful or emotionally compelling, we forget that it is a perspective and hold it as a fact.

Indeed photographic evidence has made dramatic and important changes in our lives. (See the bibliography for historical resources.) Lewis Hines's documentary photographs of child laborers indicted factories and influenced labor laws at the turn of the century. Dorothea Lange's photographs chronicled the effects of the New Deal in the 1930s. Robert Capa's photographs, such as documentation of D-Day during the Second World War, broadcast the horrors of war to the world in picture magazines. His brother and founder of ICP, Cornell Capa, coined the phrase "concerned photography" to signify photographic work that contributes to the understanding of humanity by focusing with compassion on the human condition. Cornell Capa founded the International Center of Photography as a place where the art of photography—documentary photography and photojournalism in particular—could be studied, collected, and discussed. Photographers' continuing contributions in this field (e.g., James Nachtwey's images of world conflict, Donna Ferrato's images of domestic violence, Joseph Rodriguez's images of gangs) remind us of the power of ICP's mission and of the photograph to communicate. Even if now we don't expect a single photograph to change the world, documentary photography broadens our awareness of the world by its multiplicity of perspectives and its powerful, lasting memory.

Often people harbor the expectation that documentary photography and photojournalism should present an unadulterated vision of a particular time, place, and reality. However, photographers are not invisible, and their presence influences the situation, in as much as we behave differently when we know that we are being watched or recorded by a camera. These are large issues in the field, and photographers have different standards and strategies regarding the way that they photograph in a community.

All these issues need to be considered when teaching documentary photography, as well as its most appealing use: to capture a slice of life. A documentary photograph clearly shows us what someone else saw. It connects us to one another. Perhaps this pure vision is what a young eye has to teach us.

Figure 52



The following discussion questions address key issues in documentary photography. The sample curricula that follow illustrate a balanced approach to teaching the history, techniques, aesthetics, and practice of documentary photography. **Focus Links** reference general lesson plans and activities in *Part IV*.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: INTERPRETING DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHS

### 1 DEFINITIONS

- What is documentary photography? What is photojournalism? (Consider this: Documentary photography is like a statement; photojournalism is like an explanation; fine art photography is like an expression.)
- What is a document?
- Are documentary or photojournalistic pictures the same as facts?
- If two photographers took a picture of the same thing, would they look the same or different? Why?
- What is point of view?

### 2 ISSUES IN DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY

- What kind of impact do photographs have?
- Can photography be used to effect social change?
- How are photographic images used by the media?
- What is a stereotype? How are stereotypes perpetuated and broken by photography?
- How do you establish a connection to the community that you are photographing?
- How do you approach people when you photograph them?

### 3 PERSONAL PROJECTS

How would you approach taking photographs of your community or another neighborhood?

- What kind of research would you do?
- How would you develop a rapport with your subject?
- How could you earn the trust of the people you photograph?
- What problems would you face? How could you overcome them?
- What is your responsibility to the subject?
- What artistic choices would you make?
- What techniques (e.g., lighting: flash or natural; film: color or black-and-white) are best for this subject matter?
- What style is most appropriate for this subject?
- What point of view best expresses your relationship to the subject?
- When editing the final pictures, which would you include to tell the story?

# SAMPLE DOCUMENTARY 15-SESSION CURRICULUM

## (with darkroom access)

Because students can practice printing skills in either a traditional darkroom or a digital “darkroom” (computer set up), this darkroom curriculum presents both options. For more information on these darkroom set ups, see *Appendix 3*. For more information on digital imaging, see *Part III, Chapter 16: Photography & Digital Imaging*.

### **GOAL**

---

To create a documentary photography essay with final layouts either mounted on poster board or produced as a magazine

### **MATERIALS**

---

Journals (blank pages)

Polaroid cameras (can be shared in pairs)

Polaroid 600 Plus film (5 shots per student)

Exhibition materials (poster board)

35mm manual cameras, traditional or digital (can be shared in pairs)

Darkroom or computer lab

#### **For traditional camera:**

Film (1 roll/36 exp. per camera per shoot)

Negative sleeves (1 x rolls of film)

Photographic paper (3 boxes RC 8" x 10" 500 sheets)

Chemistry and related darkroom materials (See *Appendix 3*.)

#### **For digital camera:**

Zip disk to store final images and curriculum resources at school

Printing paper (60 sheets, 8" x 10", six prints per student)

Computer software, scanner, and related materials (See *Appendix 3* and *Part III, Chapter 16: Photography & Digital Imaging*.)

**Related Focus Links:****Curriculum**

See Part IV.

**Focus Link 1****SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY?**

- Present slides, magazines, and books to discuss documentary photography
- Pose questions appropriate to levels of visual literacy
- Ask students: What is a community? What would you like to show about your community?
- Write their definition on the board and have them write in their notebooks
- Conduct hands-on Polaroid activity practicing point of view
- Distribute journals and tape portraits in journals
- Homework:
  - Write about what you see in the scene
  - Write about what the photographer's point of view was

**Focus Link 19****Focus Link 16****Focus Link 2****SESSION 2 CAMERA AS A TOOL**

- Discuss how the 35mm camera works, all its parts and controls, using handouts, manuals, and cameras (Note: If the manual controls on a digital camera don't allow for practicing certain techniques, such as shutter speed or depth of field, gear the lesson to framing and focus instead.)
- Let students practice operating the camera
- View examples of documentary photographs illustrating controls such as shutter speed, depth of field, framing, or focus
- Homework: Using the empty slide frame, view your home and neighborhood settings to practice framing

**Focus Link 3****SESSION 3 CREATING IMAGES**

- Group students in pairs to share cameras and take photographs in the neighborhood
- Assignments: Practice stop motion, depth of field, framing, focus, or blur
- Homework: Do technical reading (See the bibliography.)

---

## SESSION 4 PROCESSING IMAGES

- Demonstrate traditional film processing in a lab/downloading digital images to a computer
- Tutor students as they process their own film/use computer software
- Homework: Review technical reading (See the bibliography.)

## SESSION 5 PRINTING IMAGES

- Make contact sheets or prints (two copies)
- Pin up samples of prints made at different settings so students have reference points
- Homework: Paste images (cut selections from contacts or use prints) in journal and write about the images and the experience of creating them

***Focus Link 34***

***Focus Link 7***

***Focus Link 21***

***Focus Link 4***

## SESSION 6 GALLERY VISIT

- View different styles of documentary photography
- Discuss techniques used
- Document the trip
- Homework: Write a review of one of the gallery shows

## SESSION 7 DISCUSSING IMAGES

- View student work and discuss what they noticed about the community
- Show magazine photo essays and discuss sequences and projects
- Further define the theme for the class project (Sample themes: how can you define what a community is and visually represent its different elements; people at work and issues of labor and commerce; the ethnicity of the neighborhood, past and present, and how traditions are sustained.)
- Homework: Collect images from publications relating to theme

---

***Focus Link 3*****SESSION 8 CREATING IMAGES**

- Review framing and focus
- Assignment: Create images that focus on the class theme
- Homework: Process film/download digital images on own, if lab access allows (If not, you will need two printing sessions for every one listed in this curriculum.)

**SESSION 9 PRINTING IMAGES**

- Work on printing skills
- Pin up samples of prints made at different settings so students have reference points
- Homework: Paste images in journal and write about the theme

***Focus Link 5*****SESSION 10 CREATING IMAGES**

- Assignment: Create photographs relating to the class theme and practice point of view
- Homework: Process film/download digital images and make contact sheets or prints, if lab access allows

***Focus Link 6*****SESSION 11 EDITING IMAGES**

- Edit and discuss images, being clear about criteria for editing: content and design
- Show examples of the final form of the project
- Show samples of street portraits
- Discuss how to approach strangers and ask to take their portrait
- Role-play in class
- Homework: Continue printing

***Focus Link 9*****SESSION 12 GUEST ARTIST VISIT**

- Introduce artist, who presents work and experiences as a professional
- With the artist, edit prints and contact sheets
- Homework: Process film/download digital images and make contact sheets or prints, if lab access allows

---

***Focus Link 5***

---

**SESSION 13 CREATING IMAGES**

- Assignment: Create portraits of strangers
- Homework: Process film/download digital images and make contact sheets or prints, if lab access allows

**SESSION 14 MAKING FINAL PRINTS**

- Edit and make final prints
- Discuss artist's statement
- Homework: Write an artist's statement

***Focus Link 22***

---

**SESSION 15 FINAL PROJECT**

- Edit, sequence, and discuss images relating to theme
- Arrange edited images in final layout (Note: To display, mount on poster board or bulletin board. To produce as a magazine, look at samples and create mock ups, or try to work with a guest artist designer.) If necessary, schedule extra sessions with a few students interested in helping with the final project.
- Evaluate class

## SAMPLE DOCUMENTARY 15-SESSION CURRICULUM

(without darkroom access)

This curriculum uses a variety of hands-on activities to impart a sense of process even without access to a traditional darkroom.

### **GOAL**

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To create documentary picture stories describing the community presented as a slide show (in black-and-white for a different effect)

### **MATERIALS**

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Journals (blank pages)  
Polaroid cameras (can be shared in pairs)  
Polaroid 600 Plus film (5 shots per student)  
35mm manual cameras (can be shared in pairs)  
Film (1 roll/36 exp. per camera per shoot) black-and-white  
Polapan processors  
Black-and-white Polapan film and slide mounts  
Copy slide film  
Slide projector  
Lowel hot lights  
Black poster board  
Lab processing fees

**Related Focus Links:****Curriculum**

See Part IV.

***Focus Link 1*****SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY?**

- Introduce the theme of documentary photography in the community
- Present slides, magazines, and books to discuss documentary photography
- Pose questions appropriate to levels of visual literacy
- Ask students to define their neighborhood
- Write their definition on the board and have them write in their notebooks
- Conduct hands-on Polaroid activity (black-and-white film) practicing point of view
- Distribute journals and tape portraits in journals
- Homework:
  - Write about what you see in the scene
  - Write about what the photographer's point of view was

***Focus Link 19******Focus Link 16******Focus Link 2*****SESSION 2 CAMERA AS A TOOL**

- Discuss how the 35mm camera works, all its parts and controls, using handouts, manuals, and cameras
- Let students practice operating the camera
- View examples of work illustrating controls such as shutter speed, depth of field, and focus (Note: This could be a slide show with text headers defining each technique.)
- Homework: Using the empty slide frame, view your home and neighborhood settings to practice framing

***Focus Link 3*****SESSION 3 CREATING IMAGES**

- Group students in pairs to share cameras and take photographs in the neighborhood
- Assignment: Practice stop motion, depth of field, framing, focus, and blur
- Homework: Collect images from media, and write about them in the journal
- Process: Film processing and printing 4" x 6" black-and-white prints at lab

***Focus Link 40***

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## **SESSION 4 DISCUSSING IMAGES/PICTURE STORY**

(See *Part III, Chapter 14: Photography & Writing.*)

- Tape student photographs onto poster boards so everyone can view them
- Discuss examples of good technique as well as bloopers
- Discuss and demonstrate techniques to think about for the next shoot
- Discuss photo essays in magazines and images that students brought in
- Discuss a sequence of pictures (post on the blackboard or show in slide form)
- Include and describe the context shot (neighborhood background), a narrative sequence (with a person in action), and close-ups
- Assignment: Write a story based on the sequence of pictures
- Homework: Paste images in journal. Write about the images and the experience of creating them.

***Focus Link 17***

***Focus Link 34***

***Focus Link 5***

## **SESSION 5 CREATING IMAGES**

- Assignments:
  - Take pictures in the neighborhood of an event or activity
  - Try to include a context shot, a close-up, and an action series
  - Take many pictures on a particular topic from various angles and points of view
- Homework: Write in a journal about what you saw in the neighborhood while taking pictures
- Process: Film processing and printing two sets of contact sheets at lab

## **SESSION 6 DISCUSSING IMAGES/PICTURE STORIES**

- Discuss and edit contact sheets. Look for context shot, close-up, and narrative.
- Cut out edits and glue in journal
- Write about images, label the shots, write the story they tell
- View relevant historical and contemporary artwork
- Discuss and further define the theme for the class project

- 
- Homework: Collect images from publications relating to theme
  - Process: Print best edit of selections 4" x 6" prints, two sets

***Focus Link 7***

**SESSION 7 GALLERY VISIT**

- View different styles of documentary photography
- Discuss techniques used
- Document the trip
- Homework: Write a review of one of the gallery shows.
- Process: Film processing and printing 4" x 6" black-and-white prints at lab

***Focus Link 21***

**SESSION 8 CREATING IMAGES**

- Using Polapan slide film, return to the neighborhood to take pictures
- Assignments:
  - Create images related to class theme
  - Include a context shot, a close-up, and an action series
- Homework: Writing exercise
  - Select image from media or 4" x 6" prints
- Write about class theme from selected images

***Focus Link 26***

**SESSION 9 PROCESS: POLAPAN ACTIVITY**

- Process Polapan film and mount slides, working in small groups
- View slides and discuss technique and content as a class
- Edit and sequence slides on light tables in small groups
- Homework: Write about class theme from selected image

***Focus Link 9***

**SESSION 10 GUEST ARTIST VISIT**

- Introduce artist who presents work and experiences as a professional
- Show slide show of student work
- With the artist, comment upon student work
- With the artist, edit 4" x 6" black-and-white prints
- Homework: Write about class theme from selected images

---

## **SESSION 11 CREATING IMAGES/PICTURE STORIES**

- Return to neighborhood with the guest artist
- Using Polapan black-and-white slide film, create picture stories
- Assignment: Include a context shot, a close-up, and an action series
- Homework: Write about class theme from selected images

## **SESSION 12 PROCESSING AND EDITING IMAGES**

- Process Polapan film and mount slides
- Edit Polapan sequences
- Edit 4" x 6" prints related to theme
- Assignment: Write caption for selected image

***Focus Link 20***

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***Focus Link 8***

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## **SESSION 13 LIGHTING TECHNIQUES**

- Demonstrate how to make copy slides and create a set up with tables and lights.
- Make "image-and-text slides"
- Mount the 4" x 6" sequences from the previous session on black paper, leaving space for text
- Select quotes from student writings on theme or generate new text
- Write in white chalk on the black paper around the pictures
- Create copy slides of the mounted pictures and text using the copy-slide set up

***Focus Link 10***

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## **SESSION 14 ASSEMBLING FINAL PROJECT**

- Edit and sequence work for final slide show with text
- Discuss what music should accompany the images and text

## **SESSION 15 FINAL SLIDE SHOW**

- View slide show with music
- Evaluate class

# EDUCATORS' QUOTES



“No matter how many times we walk through the same neighborhood, our photography students, new and old, see and discover new things or new ways to photograph them. It’s amazing. The work illustrates the importance of ongoing projects and helps to show us how our neighborhood changes. ICP at The Point gives young photographers the opportunity to share their work, not just by taking the photographs, but also by returning the photographs to the community in the form of an exhibition here in their gallery, or in the publication, or in The Point’s newspaper, or by simply bringing a picture back to someone they photographed. Whether these young artists continue with the documentary tradition doesn’t really matter; it’s a springboard to other ways of seeing. Teaching documentary photography as a primer provides a solid foundation. It’s so important to have this basic foundation, it’s the ABCs of photography, and from there you can develop a language for just about anything, from photojournalism to fine art photography.”

Dona Ann McAdams, Photographer/ICP Instructor

“

*I've been making these Tuesday after-school documentary forays in Hunts Point for over two years now. Oftentimes the terrain covered is as quotidian as my route from the subway station, but to this is added the heightened awareness of walking with a group of high-energy kids, armed with cameras and intent.*

*Now for the students, this ground is even more well trod, but when they start making comments like, 'Look at this light,' or approaching a policeman and politely asking to take his picture, or just huddling over a frozen puddle intently, I know that Tuesdays have irrevocably altered their way of looking at the world and its possibilities."*

Mara Faye Lethem, Photographer/ Program Manager, ICP at The Point

“

*The images that students make and the pride that they feel create a perfect avenue for communication with those around them. Whether speaking with a parent who is disappointed about a child's performance, a grandparent who adores that child, a concerned teacher in school, or friends from the neighborhood, the student's images provide the vehicle for a meaningful dialogue. The photograph gives those around them a glimpse into their mind. It can also express feelings that are difficult to articulate at that age.*

*The most important thing we are doing is giving our students a sense of self-worth. I try to help each student understand that he or she is unique and has a wonderful and interesting story that the world needs to hear, that the life of a young person today in the South Bronx is a story worth telling, and that people are very interested in hearing it. I tell them to think of it as a film, to document their lives, not just for others but also for themselves. They will soon grow up and treasure the vanished moments and people that they are documenting today. Whether they go on to work as professional photographers is irrelevant; they will always take and look at pictures."*

Frank Franca, Photographer/ICP Instructor

## **FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY: A CURRICULUM GUIDE**

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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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# 8

## Portraiture Projects

### OVERVIEW

This chapter discusses how portraiture engages students and presents educational material and sample curriculum using a variety of hands-on activities.

Figure 53

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## Portraiture: A Tool for Reflection

Ever since the first portrait was created in 1839 on the mirrored surface of a Daguerreotype, portraiture has been one of the most popular, captivating uses of the medium. The excitement surrounding the first portraits was called Daguerreotypomania, describing the frenzy over the startling invention, its unlikely boxy tool, eager photographers, and customers seeking likenesses. Imagine seeing for the first time a near-permanent reflection of what you look like, the illusion in the mirror preserved and wrapped in a velvet frame. The essential kernel of this thrill continues today. Whether looking at a professional studio portrait or a photo-booth snapshot, there is the sensation of surprise as you assimilate your appearance in the picture with your self-image and inner identity. Looking at a self-portrait, you may think, “Is that what I really look like? Is that who I am?”

Because of the connection to identity, portraiture is one of the richest areas to explore with students. At a time in their lives when students are defining themselves, portraiture can serve as an important tool for self-reflection. Constructing a self-portrait empowers students to define and represent themselves. Discussing and writing about their portraits can reveal how they see themselves. Negotiating a portraiture session with a classmate reveals the limits of our ability to control how we are represented and perceived.

Figure 54



Figure 55



Part of the excitement comes from the opportunity to present the self in a photograph. Ultimately, the resulting image shows more than what was planned and less than who the person truly is. We can critique the shortcomings of the photograph, its inability to reveal the complete spectrum of our character, moods, and life story. We can also commend the photograph's ability to capture the essence of a person or a particular characteristic. Ironically, two adages are equally true: "The photograph is a lie," and "Photographs never lie." Nevertheless, the difference between what is outside and what is inside becomes clear, and this is an important recognition for young people.

"Who am I? How do others see me? How do I look today?" These are pressing questions for young people, and the drama of creating portraits can exorcise many of these issues. "Should I dress up for the shoot today? I am afraid of being in front of the camera. I can't wait to be an actor in front of the camera. Wait a minute, that is not what I look like. Is it? Look at my friends—they look different. They look upset! They look like movie stars!"

A portraiture activity never fails to engage students in both creating images and in thinking about how images communicate. Students learn about the elements of photography at the same time as they practice dealing with people. Taking portraits of one another encourages students to work together. Determining where to set the picture, how to pose, or what expression or gesture to emphasize, all require communication and thought. Assuming roles of fictional or historical characters in costume is a wonderful way to connect to literature or history as well as an opportunity to role-play and imagine. Creating portraits is personal, interactive, and challenging. In short, portraiture is fun.

The following discussion questions and activities present ways to explore portraiture with students. The sample curricula illustrate a balanced approach to teaching the history, techniques, aesthetics, and practice of portraiture. **Focus Links** reference general lesson plans and activities in *Part IV*.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: INTERPRETING PORTRAITS

Every day we observe people, and from their expression, gestures, and actions, we interpret who they are and how they are feeling. When we study a portrait of someone, we use the same skills, assumptions, and acts of imagination to interpret the subject's identity and mood. A portrait provides us with a glimpse into someone's character and life. It is an opportunity to study who the person is, based on the visual description of that person at a certain place and time, and as interpreted by the photographer's sensibility and technique. A portrait provides a rare opportunity to stare and not be considered rude!

---

Look carefully at a portrait and discuss the following questions.

**Expression:** Describe the person's expression. Can you guess what the person is feeling?

**Gesture:** Describe what the person is doing with his or her hands. Can you guess what signals the person is giving? What habits or mannerisms does the person have?

**Pose:** Describe how the person is standing. Can you guess what his or her attitude is?

**Action:** What is the person doing?

**Motivation:** Can you guess why the person is doing it?

**Clothing:** Describe what the person is wearing. Does the clothing indicate the time period? Is the person wearing clothing for a particular type of activity? Can you guess what the person is like?

**Setting:** The setting, the background, and the foreground often provide information about the person in the photograph. What details do you see in the setting? What does the setting add to your interpretation of the subject?

**Composition:** Describe the composition. Do you see any prominent shapes, diagonals, patterns, or colors?

**Techniques:** Consider the use of lighting and other techniques. Does the lighting add to the atmosphere surrounding the subject?

**Point of view:** From where did the photographer take the picture? (From above, below, the side, or at an angle?)

**Character:** Consider the details in the picture, your observations, and the techniques used to create the photograph. If the person could speak, what would he or she say?

## PORTRAITURE ASSIGNMENTS

---

**CREATE PORTRAITS!** Self portraits, family portraits, portraits of others, portraits against a plain background, portraits in the environment, posed and candid portraits, portraits without showing the face using an object or symbol, portraits of the community...

---

Consider the subject: What you want to say about them?

- What features do you want to highlight?

Consider setting: Where do you want to take the portrait?

- Environmental portraits include details in the environment that reveal something about the subject. Do you want the setting to include details?
- Portraits against a plain background call more attention to the face and body of a person, to pure character unrelated to context. Do you want the setting to be a simple background: a wall, a color, or a pattern? You could also use a shallow **depth of field** or blur the background and keep the subject in focus.

Consider lighting: How do you want to use lighting?

- Do you want the lighting to be soft or hard, natural or artificial?
- What features do you want the lighting to accentuate?
- Light on the forehead can make a person seem intellectual.
- Highlighting the lips can make a person seem sensual.
- Lighting on the side of a face can indicate two sides to a person, light and dark.
- Lighting that casts a triangle on the cheek is called Rembrandt lighting. Its quality of dimension can suggest a complex person.

Consider framing and point of view:

- A portrait taken from above makes the subject look small, suggesting inferiority.
- A portrait taken from below makes a person look taller, suggesting superiority.

Types of portraits:

- Experiment with different types of lighting and points of view.
- Take one picture that is a close-up, one headshot, and one full-body portrait.
- Hint: Talk to your subject to help them relax.

Self-portraits:

- Assignment: Create one picture that includes the environment and one against a plain background.
- Hint: Use a tripod and a self-timer or a cable release to take the shot.

Family portraits:

- Assignment: Create one candid portrait and one posed portrait in the home environment
- Hint: Use either a flash or very fast film, such as TMAX 3200, when you take pictures indoors.

Symbolic portraits:

- Assignment: Create a portrait of a person without showing the person physically.
- Hint: A symbolic portrait of a person can be a picture of something significant to that person, a sneaker for an athlete, a personal object from the backpack, a bedroom, the house, or something the person created.

Portraits of the community:

- Assignment: Create portraits of people in your community, walking on the street, working in their stores, or enjoying themselves.
- Hint: You can legally create candid portraits of people in public spaces. However, it is considerate to ask people if you can take their portrait, which often results in a richer portrait for the collaboration.

## SAMPLE PORTRAITURE

### 15-SESSION CURRICULUM (with darkroom access)

Because students can practice printing skills in either a traditional darkroom or a digital “darkroom” (computer set up), this darkroom curriculum presents both options. For more information on these darkroom set ups, see *Appendix 3*. For more information on digital imaging, see *Part III, Chapter 16: Photography & Digital Imaging*.

#### **GOAL**

---

To explore identity and to create an exhibition of natural and posed portraits of students

#### **MATERIALS**

---

Journals (blank pages)

Polaroid cameras (can be shared in pairs)

Polaroid 600 Plus film (5 shots per student)

Large-format camera, film, and lighting equipment for demonstration

Exhibition materials (box frames or foam core)

35mm manual cameras, traditional or digital (can be shared in pairs)

Darkroom or computer lab

#### **For traditional camera:**

Film (1 roll/36 exp. per camera per shoot)

Negative sleeves (1 x rolls of film)

Photographic paper (3 boxes RC 8" x 10" 500 sheets)

Chemistry and related darkroom materials (See *Appendix 3*.)

#### **For digital camera:**

Zip disk to store final images and curriculum resources at school

Printing paper (60 sheets, 8" x 10", six prints per student)

Computer software, scanner, and related materials (See *Appendix 3* and *Part III, Chapter 16: Photography & Digital Imaging*.)

**Related Focus Links:****Curriculum**

See Part IV.

***Focus Link 1*****SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS PORTRAITURE?**

- Introduce the theme of portraiture and techniques that the class will cover
- Present slides and discuss portraiture
- Pose questions appropriate to levels of visual literacy
- Conduct hands-on Polaroid activity taking individual and group portraits
- Distribute journals and tape portraits in journals
- Homework: Write about how you see yourself in the portraits

***Focus Link 2*****SESSION 2 CAMERA AS A TOOL**

- Discuss how the 35mm camera works, all its parts and controls, using handouts, manuals, and cameras (Note: If the manual controls on a digital camera don't allow for practicing certain techniques, such as shutter speed or depth of field, gear the lesson to framing and focus instead.)
- Let students practice operating the camera
- View examples of portraits illustrating controls such as shutter speed, depth of field, framing, or focus
- Homework: Using the empty slide frame, view your home and neighborhood settings to practice framing

***Focus Link 3*****SESSION 3 CREATING IMAGES**

- Group students in pairs to take portraits of classmates in a familiar context: schoolyard, classroom, neighborhood location
- Assignment: Practice stop motion, depth of field, framing, focus, or blur
- Homework: Do technical reading (See the bibliography.)

**SESSION 4 PROCESSING IMAGES**

- Demonstrate traditional film processing in a lab/ downloading digital images to a computer
- Tutor students as they process their own film/use computer software
- Homework: Review technical reading (See the bibliography.)

---

## **SESSION 5 PRINTING IMAGES**

- Make contact sheets or prints (two copies)
- Pin up samples of prints made at different settings so students have reference points
- Homework: Paste images (cut selections from contacts or use prints) in a journal and write about the images and the experience of creating them

### ***Focus Link 34***

### ***Focus Link 5***

## **SESSION 6 CREATING IMAGES**

- Discuss framing and show samples of point of view as well as close-up and full-body portraits
- Assignment: Take pictures of classmates from different points of view and create close-up and full-body portraits
- Homework: Process film/download digital images and make contact sheets or prints, if lab access allows (If not, you will need two printing sessions for every one listed in this curriculum.)

## **SESSION 7 PRINTING IMAGES**

- Work on printing skills
- Pin up samples of prints made at different settings so students have reference points
- Homework: Paste images in a journal, and write about them, focusing on point of view and perception

### ***Focus Link 16***

### ***Focus Link 7***

## **SESSION 8 GALLERY VISIT**

- View different styles of portraiture
- Discuss techniques used
- Document the trip
- Homework: Write a review of one of the gallery shows

### ***Focus Link 21***

### ***Focus Link 9***

## **SESSION 9 GUEST ARTIST VISIT**

- Introduce artist, who presents work and experiences as a professional
- Have students interview the artist
- Homework: Write about visit in a journal

---

***Focus Link 8***

### **SESSION 10 LIGHTING TECHNIQUES**

- Demonstrate lighting effects using a large-format camera and lighting equipment (Note: You can also invite a guest artist to show this technique.)
- Create individual and group portraits
- Work in teams, as photographer, lighting assistant, stylist, and model using 35mm cameras in addition to large-format equipment
- Homework: Write in a journal about how you see yourself in the studio portraits

### **SESSION 11 DISCUSSING IMAGES**

- View and discuss student work
- Show samples of natural lighting, environmental portraiture, and self-portraits by historical and contemporary photographers
- Demonstrate using a light reflector
- Discuss things to think about for the next shoot
- Homework: Create a self-portrait at home

***Focus Link 3***

### **SESSION 12 CREATING IMAGES**

- Discuss applying knowledge of studio lighting to natural light
- Assignment: Create portraits of classmates using natural lighting and found frames in the environment
- Homework: Process film/download digital images and make contact sheets or prints, if lab access allows

***Focus Link 6***

### **SESSION 13 EDITING IMAGES**

- Edit and discuss images, being clear about criteria for editing: content and design
- Show examples of the final form of the project
- Homework: Write about your best self-portrait

---

## SESSION 14 MAKING FINAL PRINTS

- Edit and make final prints
- Discuss artist's statement
- Homework: Write an artist's statement

***Focus Link 22***

## SESSION 15 FINAL PROJECT

- Edit and discuss images
- If possible, assemble edited images into final format (e.g., box frames or dry mount on foam core). If necessary, schedule extra sessions with a few students interested in helping with the final exhibition or project.
- Evaluate class

## SAMPLE PORTRAITURE

### 15-SESSION CURRICULUM (without darkroom access)

#### **GOAL**

---

To explore identity and color portraits using a variety of materials—color photographic prints, sun prints, Polaroid transfers, and collage

#### **MATERIALS**

---

Journals (blank pages)

Polaroid cameras (can be shared in pairs)

Polaroid 600 Plus film (5 shots per student)

Large-format camera, if possible

Polaroid PN film (several boxes for one shoot)

35mm manual cameras (can be shared in pairs)

Film (1 roll/36 exp. per camera per shoot)

Color print and slide film

Polaroid transfer processor

Watercolor paper for Polaroid transfers

Lighting equipment

Disposable cameras

Collage materials: white poster board, scissors, glue, paints, acetate, tape, etc.

Materials for activities, see *Part IV*

Exhibition materials (frames or poster board)

**Related Focus Links:****Curriculum**

See Part IV.

**Focus Link 1****SESSION 1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS PORTRAITURE?**

- Introduce the theme of portraiture and techniques that the class will cover
- Present slides and discuss portraiture
- Pose questions appropriate to levels of visual literacy
- Explain how the camera works
- Conduct hands-on Polaroid activity taking individual and group portraits (Note: If possible, for demonstration purposes, use a large-format camera and Polaroid PN film, to create a negative and a print. Let each group work with the large-format camera and with the one-step Polaroid cameras.)
- Distribute journals and tape portraits in journals
- Homework: Write about how you see yourself in the portraits

**SESSION 2 PROCESS: SUN PRINTS**

- View sample sun prints and discuss the history and process
- Illustrate the photographic process with a sun print activity
- Use personal objects such as jewelry
- Create self-portrait drawings on acetate (use text, too)
- If possible, use negatives from the introductory class
- Homework: Write about the images in a journal

**Focus Link 29****Focus Link 34****Focus Link 2****SESSION 3 CAMERA AS A TOOL**

- Demonstrate how the 35mm camera works, all its parts and controls, using handouts, manuals, and cameras
- Let students practice operating the camera
- View examples of work illustrating controls such as shutter speed, depth of field, framing, and focus
- Homework: Using empty slide frame, view their home and neighborhood settings to practice framing

---

***Focus Link 3*****SESSION 4 CREATING IMAGES**

- Group students in pairs to take portraits of classmates in a familiar context: schoolyard, classroom, neighborhood location
- Assignments: Practice stop motion, depth of field, framing, and focus
- Homework: Collect images from media, paste them in a journal, and write about how people are represented
- Process: Film processing and printing 4" x 6" prints at lab

***Focus Link 4*****SESSION 5 DISCUSSING IMAGES**

- View student work and discuss successes and bloopers
- Discuss and demonstrate techniques and things to think about for the next shoot
- Explain color theory, using relevant historical and contemporary artwork
- Conduct drawing activity to reinforce color theory:
  - Tape a photograph in the journal
  - Use colored pencils to draw around the image using a similar color palette to the photograph
- Homework: Paste images in a journal and write about what works well and what doesn't and the experience of creating them

***Focus Link 34*****SESSION 6 CREATING IMAGES**

- Discuss framing and show samples of point of view as well as close-up and full-body portraits
- Assignment: Take pictures from different points of view and create close-up and full-body portraits
- Homework: Using pictures of the self and others, write from the point of view of a photographer, then of a subject
- Process: Film processing and printing 4" x 6" prints, two sets, at lab

***Focus Link 16***

---

***Focus Link 6*****SESSION 7 EDITING IMAGES**

- Using 4" x 6" portraits, discuss elements of portraiture and edit the pictures
- Conduct reflection activity:
  - Choose the best self-portrait
  - Paste in a journal, draw and write your reflections around it
  - Make a line drawing from one of the best portraits
  - Trace the image on acetate
  - Write on or around the image
- Write about portraits in a journal: How do you see yourself in the pictures?

***Focus Link 7*****SESSION 8 GALLERY VISIT**

- View different styles of portraiture
- Discuss techniques used
- Homework: Write a review of one of the gallery shows

***Focus Link 21******Focus Link 8*****SESSION 9 LIGHTING TECHNIQUES**

- Discuss candid and posed portraits, family snapshots, and portraits
- Lighting demonstration in class
- Homework: Using disposable flash cameras, create family portraits. Create candid, posed, individual, group, close-up, full-body, and environmental portraits. Create a self-portrait with yourself in the picture and one just of your bedroom.  
(Note: In order to create successful pictures in the home setting, students need explicit assignments.)

***Focus Link 9*****SESSION 10 GUEST ARTIST VISIT**

- Introduce artist, who presents work and experiences as a professional
- With artist, conduct hands-on lighting and studio technique activity
- Homework: Bring in props and clothing
- Process: Film processing and printing 4" x 6" prints, two sets, at lab

---

## **SESSION 11 CREATING IMAGES**

- Create a studio setting for portraits, with teams playing role of photographer, model, stylist, and lighting technician
- Hand out family prints
- Homework: Show prints to family and ask for reactions and stories inspired by pictures. Transcribe stories into journal.
- Process: Color slides at lab

### **Focus Link 41**

### **Focus Link 27**

### **Focus Link 34**

## **SESSION 12 POLAROID TRANSFERS**

- Edit and discuss color studio slide work
- Conduct Polaroid transfer activity to illustrate the photographic process using the color studio work
- Homework: Write about Polaroid transfers

## **SESSION 13 COLLAGE**

- Hand out the other set of family pictures and extra work prints from class portraits
- Create a collage with the family portraits, extra class portraits, and Xeroxes of family snapshots, text from family story
- Homework: Edit and type best family story

### **Focus Link 6**

### **Focus Link 22**

### **Focus Link 10**

## **SESSION 14 EDITING IMAGES**

- Edit and discuss final prints
- Discuss artist's statements
- Homework: Write an artist's statement

## **SESSION 15 ASSEMBLING FINAL PROJECT**

- Mount final portraits and artists' statements
- Evaluate class
- Work with a small number of students to install the exhibition

# EDUCATORS' QUOTES



**“**The theme of our class was *Our Selves and Our Community*. The students were given various assignments in portraiture, with particular emphasis on technical or formal elements. During photographic field trips, we posed questions to help focus the day: What does my world look like? What and who do I care about? How do I look today? What is my strongest feature? The goal was to explore with the camera, to learn to see with their developing visual language. As one of my students shared, 'Photography lets me say, for the first time, something that comes from me, what I want to say, not what someone else is telling me to say.' It is a tool to use with respect toward yourself and others.”

Lina Bertucci, Photographer/ ICP Instructor

**“**I am currently witnessing specific growth in one student. She impresses me as shy, quiet, and thoughtful person, who comes from a fairly conservative background. Although she adheres to a standard, her mind is actively questioning conventional thought. Our conversations always revolve around something she finds controversial and seems somewhat fearful of.

Up until two weeks ago, she had never taken a portrait. She always shoots at a considerable distance from her subject, and her subject matter is either her dog or a landscape. (Preferably her dog in a landscape!) She told me that she is afraid of entering someone's space. We discussed this topic informally in preparation for our next assignment—a portrait. I was conscious of creating a shooting environment that reduced her stressful feelings about approaching a subject.

*I had instructed students on how to shoot using strobe the previous week, and after we arranged the classroom into a photo studio, I took Polaroids and showed them exactly what I wanted them to do. I then turned the Polaroid camera over to the students. They took turns shooting Polaroids. Some of the braver students began shooting with their 35mm cameras.*

*When this student took her turn, she immediately got right into it — experimenting with camera angles, directing the model. She really liked shooting portraits in the classroom in part because she liked the literal space. She said that it felt ‘good’ there. There was a lot of positive laughter in the room, to which everyone responded. We succeeded in creating an informal atmosphere in which everyone felt that experimentation was okay. During our last session, she printed her first successful portrait. I could see that she felt not only pride, but also a sense of accomplishment.”*

Deborah Klesenski, Photographer/ICP Instructor

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*Our street studio project consists of bringing a backdrop and all of the accessories for a daylight studio directly into the streets of the South Bronx. This provides a marvelous opportunity to create portraits that are stylistically formal but also imbued with the casual attitude of ‘the street’ with all its inherent style. In addition to learning about formal portraiture, students interact with strangers and direct the subjects of portraits. It also teaches students interested in fashion photography the importance of personal style and how ideas from the street can be applied to their own work. The street studio creates a dialogue with the community. Inevitably, someone commissions one of the students for a project. The street studio has been invited to various street fairs and Family Day events, where students shoot portraits and are paid for their work. This is a perfect balance of art, education, and industry. On the one hand, wonderfully unique images are preserved on film, and, on the other, students are learning about commerce and getting paid for their work.”*

Frank Franca, Photographer/ICP Instructor

# STUDENT QUOTES

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*Art is a way of getting away from your problems and finding the answer to the question, 'Who am I?' and that's why I like photography. When I take my pictures I try to see what the person feels and if I feel the same way. There is a connection between how I am feeling and the way the people I photograph are feeling. I get my ideas from people's souls. You can see people's feelings in the picture. A camera is like a soul capturer. I would tell young photographers to take pictures the way you want, understand them, and make the picture show who you are at the time you took the picture."*

Jasmine Alvarez, 18, ICP at The Point Student

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*I took this picture because the building is tall and skinny like me. It also reminds me of all the tall and skinny people in my family and in basketball teams like Michael Jordan and Shaquille O'Neal.”*

Sean Boddie, 14, Adolph S. Ochs School Student

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*I like this picture because the camera is focused on my friend Sean. It looks like I told him to get in that position, but I didn't. The background is very slow and blurry so only Sean is in focus.”*

Steven Ramos, 14, Adolph S. Ochs School Student

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*My friend Katie Ruiz took this picture. In this picture I feel very happy and proud of who I am because I always thought I was ugly, but then my friend Katie made me realize that I'm pretty in pictures and in every way. So I felt very happy in this picture, and I thank Katie very much for being there for me. “*

Venus Badillo, 14, Adolph S. Ochs School Student

