

Digital Photography in the Art Curriculum

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I love using photography with my students because, in many ways, photography is a medium that can "level the playing field." Students who might not otherwise consider themselves artists have another tool to tell a story, show a new perspective, or document our environment. The resources here can help you introduce a photography unit or develop a photography curriculum in your classroom.

Learning the Technology

With the emergence of affordable digital cameras and technology grants, integrating photography as part of your art program is now possible. Whether you have access to "point and shoot," iTouch, or an SLR camera, learning the basics are important. Brain Pop (tinyurl.com/BrainPop-Photo) provides a good photography overview, while comparing features of film to digital. Photo Op (tinyurl.com/NGAphoto), from the National Gallery of Art, allows students to interact and explore changes with focus, aperture, and shutter speed. Appropriate for older students, Penn State has a beautiful animated website that explains depth of field, focal length, white balance, shutter speed, exposure, and ISO (photo.comm.psu.edu).

Composition through History

Start a conversation about photographic history by asking your students what they see and what they think. A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Thoughts (tinyurl.com/1000Thoughts) uses Bloom's Taxonomy to examine a photograph taken during the turn of the twentieth century. Also useful for studying the history of photography is a detective game from the McCord Museum. This resource focuses on

the nineteenth-century photography of William Notman while encouraging exploration of historical detail (tinyurl.com/WilliamNotman). The Getty has created a photography curriculum based on visual analysis and artist statements (tinyurl.com/GettyPhotoLesson). Also from the Getty are lesson ideas based on the work of photographer Dorothea Lange, useful for teachers teaching early elementary through high school (tinyurl.com/LangeLessons).

Studio Lesson Ideas

Start by looking for a list of lesson plan ideas to incorporate into the classroom from the Venspired blog (tinyurl.com/classroomIdeas). Next, see how Jessica Balsley, an elementary art teacher near Des Moines, Iowa, uses digital cameras to teach about the elements of art and principles of design through a digital photo scavenger hunt (tinyurl.com/DigitalScavengerHunt).

Also useful for upper-level teachers, high-school teacher Matt Calthron, from Palm Beach, California, has packed ideas for student photo assignments on his amazing DATA Wiki (tinyurl.com/DATAresources). More amazing resources await at the Carrot Revolution blog, emphasizing digital imagery and inspirational photo projects including Surrealistic Me, FLOAT, and Paint the World with Light (tinyurl.com/CarrotPhoto).

Digital photography can be an amazing creative experience for your students. Challenge them to think like an artist each time they hold a camera. 📷

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