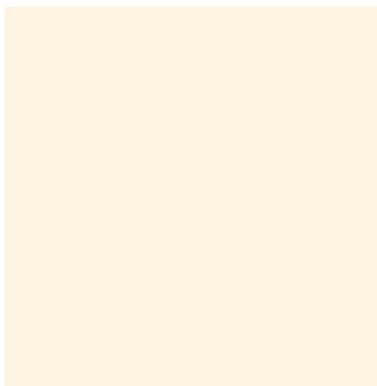
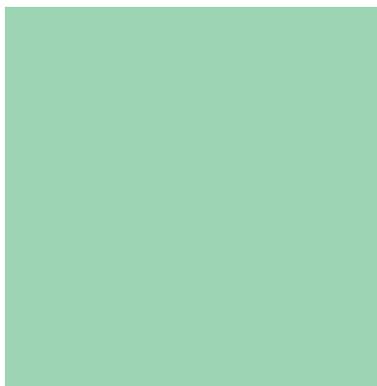
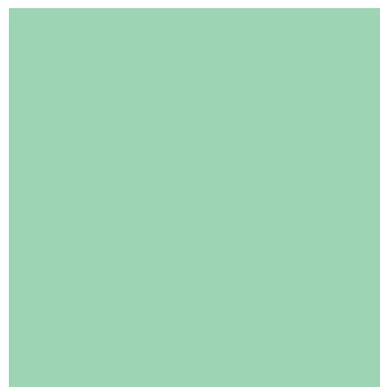
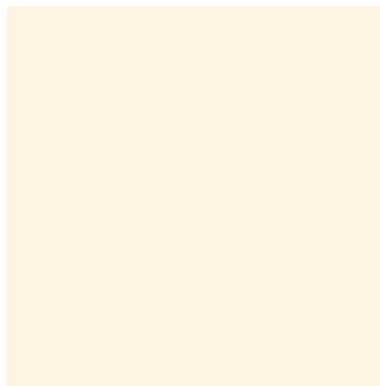


through students'



eyes

**W**hat are public schools for, and what purpose do they serve in the lives of students? What pushes students away from school, and what facilitates their academic success?

These are urgent questions in cities like Cleveland, where fewer than 40 percent of students graduate from high school. These are also the questions that a group of some twenty students from Cleveland's Lincoln-West High School have been considering for the past year - first photographically and then through writing.

"Through Students' Eyes" (TSE) participants have worked nearly every Saturday since June 2004, facilitated by a trio of committed urban community members and educators.

Jim Hammon is a veteran Cleveland teacher (laid off in last year's cuts) with nearly a dozen years experience in city schools, including Lincoln-West, our city's most diverse high school. Piet van Lier is a long-time community activist and currently a Catalyst associate editor. And Kristien Marquez-Zenkov is a former city teacher in Chicago and Seattle now directing an urban and social justice focused teacher licensure program at Cleveland State University.

The goals of TSE were to work with these high school students to document - through still photographs and video, interviews and reflective writing - what they, their families, teachers and the broader community think is important in the creation of effective schools.

We also expected to teach these youth a new set of communication and art skills that might serve them as they continued their education and entered the life of the community as adults.

Finally, we hoped to draw into closer contact with the school community the broader community. Through this Catalyst issue, an upcoming exhibition at Cleveland's Gallery of Photographic Arts (May 7th through June 25th, 2512 Church Avenue, 216.861.3062), and a second exhibition at MetroHealth Medical Center, TSE intends to create a forum for student and community voices and experiences to be heard as school improvement efforts affect their lives.

In our city schools, educators and community members must consider any means through which we might increase our students' engagement with school. In urban settings, where school too often seems like a questionably relevant interruption in young adults' lives, all curricula might attempt to engage students in this way.

In Cleveland, multiple generations of these students - who might have already formed an entire community - seem to have rejected school as an extraneous institution. It was to this cross-generational community's perception of schooling's irrelevance that we hoped to respond with "Through Students' Eyes." It is our grandest hope that these students' images and words can help not just these youth but our community to SEE how school might matter once again.

## YOUNG AND INNOCENT

SAMANTHA JONES - 11th grader

*The little girl in this picture is so young and innocent. So willing to learn and absorb all the information that life has to offer. Sometimes the problem with adults and students is that they are closed-minded. We are not willing to learn or absorb all the information that our lives have to offer. We are know-it-alls. If we were all a little bit more open-minded, we'd be full of knowledge, culture and intelligence. Our lives would be more of a learning experience. And isn't that what life is for, learning....?*



## FACTORY JOB

MARIA RODRIGUEZ - 11th grader

*I don't want to work in a factory. I work here with my friend only when they need help. It is a very boring job. I can't see myself working here in the future. Watching them get up every morning to go to work and come back from work so tired motivates me to get up every morning to go to school.*



# What is the purpose of education?

## YOUNG AND INNOCENT

SAMANTHA JONES - 11th grader

*It's funny because three years ago, I would have never even spoken to Maria. Now we are inseparable. It's weird how things happen, how two people from different backgrounds can come together. I would have never thought in a million years that Maria would be my best friend. I would have never thought we'd be taking this picture together. It's times like this that make me ponder how destiny controls our lives. How Maria and I were destined to meet and become the good friends we are today.*



# What gets in the way of succeeding in school?



## MEMORIAL

SAMUEL VILLAFUERTE - 12th grader

*Every time someone dies, there's always like a shrine, usually with Hispanics. The people I see on the shrines are often young. It just makes me want to leave the area I live in. And the reason for their death at a young age is the lack of education. They drop out of school and get involved with drugs and it leads to their demise.*



## BE YOURSELF

MAURICE TRIPP - 12th grader

*I picked this picture because it shows that your education can take you further in life than a basketball. Everyday I watch kids come to the recreation and pretend to be basketball players such as LeBron, Carmelo and Kobe Bryant, thinking that this can be the way to riches and fame. I know, because I thought the same way and I tell them everyday that school is more important than trying to be LeBron. I tell them to be yourself, and that education is the key to success instead of basketball.*



## DISTRACTIONS

TIM COUREY - 12th grader

*This picture represents the "clutter." It shows that there is so much to deal with in life, so many distractions. I think this is what discourages people from education.*

*For example, for my brother Brandon, sports is like a double-edged sword. He gets so caught up in it that sometimes I'd worry that he doesn't care too much about his grades or getting his homework done. But at the same time, it's like a motivation for him.*

*School represents something that can never be taken away from you, something that you can never lose; it's like your own treasure that no one can touch. My parents taught me this-with my mother and my father not going to college, and the way they raised us is that we deserved better as long as we worked for it.*



## ALONE

SAMUEL VILLAFUERTE - 12th grader

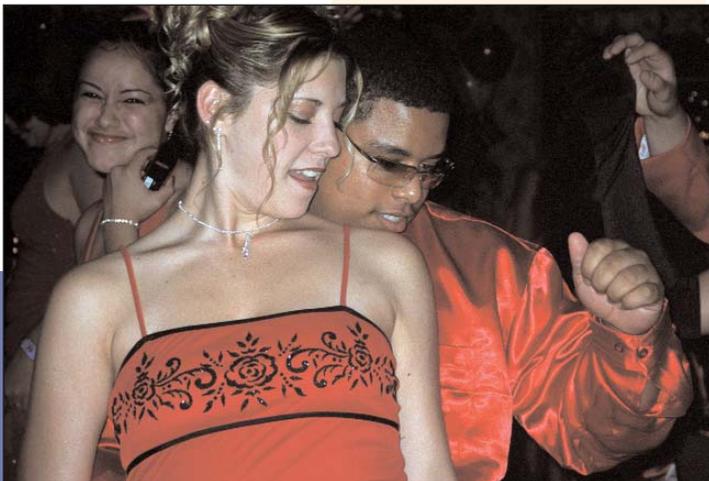
*I feel that the parents or guardians of this girl don't have an education or a care about how this girl might turn out. She is just in the streets by herself and alone. I feel as though she might grow up thinking that there is no purpose for school. She learns from her parents and her parents just live in poverty and the surroundings are depressing.*



# What helps you

# succeed

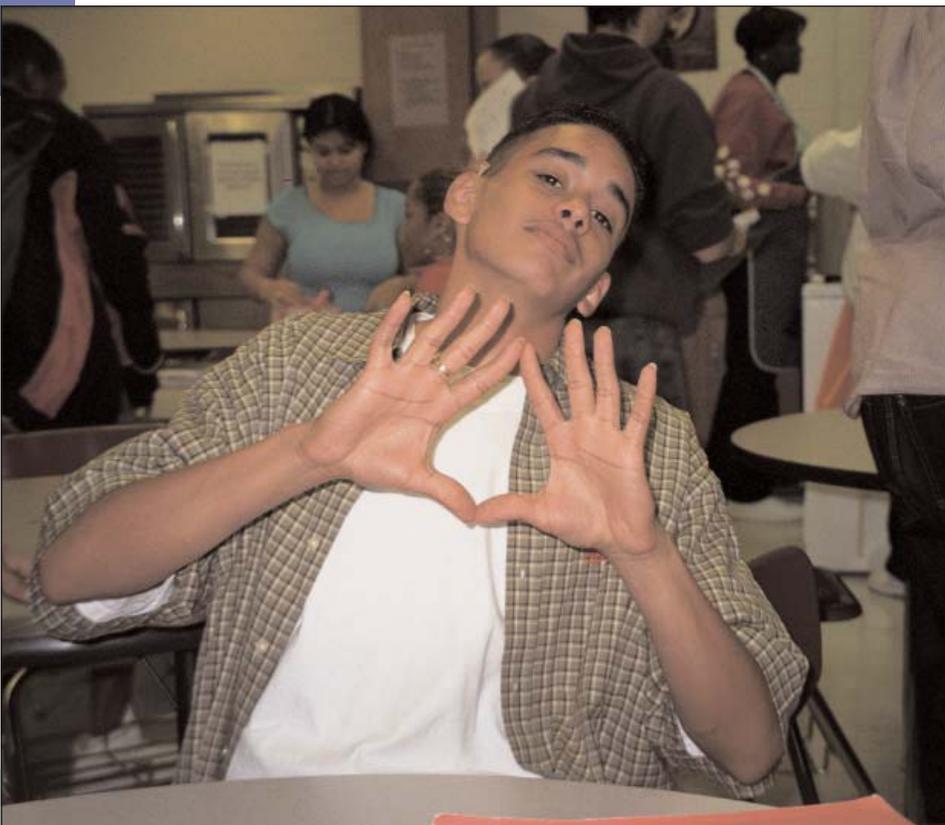
# in school?



## HAVING FUN

MARKUS STEWART - 12th grader

Teens like to have fun with other teens and it is healthy to get out to enjoy yourself for just those couple hours. It helps you relieve stress. First thing Monday morning I wake up at five o'clock and get my little sister up and ready for school, get her down to the rapid station by six and then I come back home and make sure that my younger brother and another younger sister get up and dress by six forty-five. My younger brother and I leave to catch our bus and we get to school about seven thirty or seven forty. I call both of my sisters' schools and make sure that they made it there safely before I go to my first class. During athletic seasons I go to practice after school then head to work at five thirty then I head home at ten and get there about eleven. Before going to bed at eleven forty-five or midnight, I help my mom with her daycare and help clean around the house.



## FRIENDSHIP

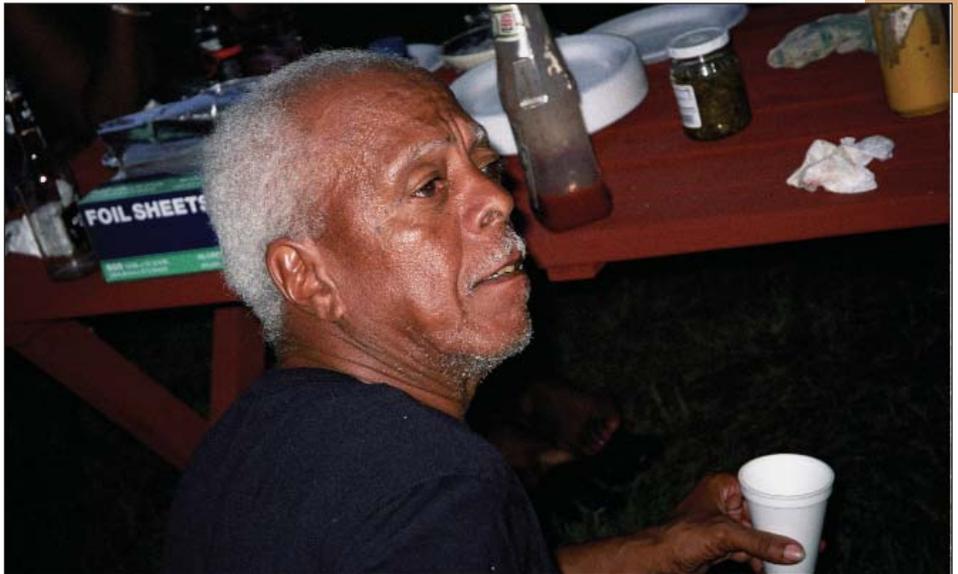
MAURICE TRIPP- 12th grader

I picked this picture because this is one of my only best friend I have besides Markus. We always said that we were going to build a dynasty and nothing can break us up. And with the recent problems Elvis is having we try to be there for him and one another if we have a problem. So the symbol he is showing in this picture means a lot to us. We don't want to lose another friend to death, streets or jail.

## MY UNCLE SID

RAESHAUN STEPHENS - 12th grader

*I think of him as one of my biggest inspirations. He is one of the many people who will sit down with me and talk to me about how important it is to go to school and get a good education. But he doesn't just talk to me about school. He also makes me feel like I can go to him about anything no matter what it may be, and he helps me with every thing and anything.*



## TRUST

XIDI ZHEN - 12th grader

*This is Tony "Fresh" Velez, and he is part of CCB (Cleveland City Breakers), a break dancing group, and he is also in drama club at Lincoln-West. The drama teacher lets him do his break dancing and plan all the dancing in school plays, even in the Christmas Carol play. Some teachers may not trust you enough to do that. That's what keeps guys like him in school.*



## THE GLUE IN MY LIFE

AMANDA TURLEY - 12th grader

*Without my grandma I would not be a senior in high school. I would not be at school every day trying to complete all of my assignments. I wouldn't be filing for financial aid or even scouting for colleges. My grandma is the glue in my life. If it was not for her I wouldn't be as together as I am. I would just be another teenager going nowhere. She has pushed me to succeed in life. She tells me that I should just suck it up and go on, that even if sometimes I think I can't I will come out on top. She is the best support system you could ever have.*





## WORKING HARD

ALEX NIMYLOWYCZ -graduate

*In this picture there is a man in a K-mart uniform, working "hard." During high school years students to begin to pick up other great responsibilities such as jobs. Sometimes they tend to work more and study less, thus making poor marks in school and eventually dropping out for a full-time job.*

## HE'S TOO NICE

MARIA RIDRIGUEZ-11th grader

*This is a picture of my homeroom teacher. He looks dorky and everything but he's so nice. My homeroom takes a lot of advantage of him. When it's homeroom everyone comes in talking, yelling screaming. Everyone comes and talks on the phone, they come and go when they please. He never tells them anything. I don't think he ever will. He's too nice.*



## BARRIERS

TIMOTHY KRICHBAUM - 12th grader

*I took the picture of the flag with the barbed wire in front of it because I think it represents the barriers that get in the way of students reaching their goals. Some of the things it represents are drugs, hanging out with the wrong people, bad parenting and babies from having sex. I know a lot of people who have dropped out of school and all of those things have played a role in at least one of my friends as the reason they dropped out. I think if the people know what gets in the way, they will help prevent it from happening. That's why I took the picture.*

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