

“Through Students’ Eyes: SEEING City Youths’ Perspectives on School”



Teachers who trust you...

This is John Sebabe. He breaks with friends of mine, as much as a couple of times a week in the summer. I go hang out with them sometimes. My friend Tony "Fresh" Velez, who goes to Lincoln-West High School, breaks with them. He's very good and he's very into it. He is also in drama club at Lincoln-West. The drama teacher lets him do his breakdancing 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.

- Xidi

Welcome to “Through Students’ Eyes!” The purpose of this packet is to get you started with considering the perspectives and voices of your students on the purposes of school. While much of the content here is free for you to use in your classroom, if you make any changes, please be sure to note where you received the original content. We’d appreciate it!

In many cases, you will be stunned by the ability of your students to work intelligently on this project. After four years with nearly 100 students, we continue to be amazed at the level and depth of student thinking that we encounter as they address the questions of school’s purposes, supports, and impediments. By completing this project with your students, you are showing them you care about what they think and you are giving them an invaluable opportunity to REALLY consider why and how school can have a constructive impact on their lives. Furthermore, as a teacher you will better understand the daily struggles your students face and the ghosts of their past that influence the way they engage in your classroom. One of the biggest benefits of this project is that you’ll build more personalized relationships with your students *which will lead to increased student achievement.*

We not only wish you the best in using the “Through Students’ Eyes” tools and methods, but we truly want to read, see and hear about your efforts and successes with your own version of this project. Our goal is to make a significant impact in the way teachers in urban centers go about the business of educating the kids who’ll one day be in charge and taking care of us. Please take advantage of our Website (www.throughstudentseyes.org) to post your students’ photographs, writings and audio files. It will be through the sharing of these artifacts that we grow as teachers and best serve our students.

Best,

Jim & Kristien

“Through Students’ Eyes: SEEING City Youths’ Perspectives on School”
Intro Activity #1

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period/Block: _____

Purposes

- What do YOU believe are the purposes of school? What do you believe will happen as a result of earning your high school diploma? What might happen if you don’t finish school?

Supports

- What has helped YOU to be successful in school? What supports exist in school and out of school that sustain your success? What do you need in your life to do well in school?

Impediments

- What gets in the way of YOUR ability to succeed in school? What obstacles exist in and out of school that impede your success? What things would you like to change that get in the way of your success?

“Through Students’ Eyes: SEEING City Youths’ Perspectives on School”
Intro Activity #2

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period/Block: _____

Project Questions

- What is the purpose of school?
- What supports your success in school?
- What things get in the way of your school success?

Perceiving Our Peers

As your teacher shows you photographs from your peers that answer the project questions (above), decide which question you think each image addresses. A picture may answer more than one of the project questions. *Explain your choice(s) with details and examples.*

Photograph A answers the following question(s):

- What is the purpose of school?
- What supports your success in school?
- What things get in the way of your success in school?



What evidence do you have to support your answer?

Photograph B answers the following question(s):

- What is the purpose of school?
- What supports your success in school?
- What things get in the way of your success in school?



What evidence do you have to support your answer?

Photograph C answers the following question(s):

- What is the purpose of school?
- What supports your success in school?
- What things get in the way of your success in school?



What evidence do you have to support your answer?

Photograph D answers the following question(s):

- What is the purpose of school?
- What supports your success in school?
- What things get in the way of your success in school?



What evidence do you have to support your answer?

The Bigger Picture

In small groups of no more than four, discuss the photographs using the following questions to guide you. Be prepared to share your groups' answers with the class.

- 🗣️ What did you notice about your group's responses?
- 🗣️ What photographs answered more than one question? How?
- 🗣️ How did the way you think about one of the photographs change after discussing it with your peers?
- 🗣️ How did the way you think about school change as a result of looking at these photographs?
- 🗣️ What new answers have you generated to the project questions?

Your teacher will now share with you what each student photographer wrote as a response to the project questions. Discuss the following questions with your group using details to support your answers.

- 🗣️ How did the written response compare with your response to the photograph?
- 🗣️ How did the way you think about school change as a result of reading the student's written response?
- 🗣️ What new answers have you generated to the project questions?

“Through Students’ Eyes: SEEING City Youths’ Perspectives on School”
Intro Activity #3

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period/Block: _____

Project Questions

- What is the purpose of school?
- What supports your success in school?
- What things get in the way of your school success?

Picturing Our Responses

Your teacher will pass out color photographs that other students have made in response to the project questions (above). Look carefully at these photographs and answer the following questions with enough details to support your answers.

Which of the pictures could serve as illustrations of YOUR OWN response to *the purpose of school*?

The picture I chose was titled: _____

What evidence do you have to support your answer?

What OTHER pictures would YOU take to represent *the purpose of school*? Try to come up with as many examples as you are able.

Which of the pictures could serve as illustrations of YOUR OWN response to *things that help me succeed in school*?

The picture I chose was titled: _____

What evidence do you have to support your answer?

What OTHER pictures would YOU take to represent *things that help me succeed in school*? Try to come up with as many examples as you are able.

Which of the pictures could serve as illustrations of YOUR OWN response to *things that get in the way of my school success*?

The picture I chose was titled: _____

What evidence do you have to support your answer?

What OTHER pictures would YOU take to represent *things that get in the way of my school success*? Try to come up with as many examples as you are able.

Next Steps

- Participate in a “photo-walk” field trip with your class
- Take a digital camera or camera phone with you *wherever you go*, taking photographs of your answers to the project questions
- Remember to ask everyone for permission before taking their picture - a permission form may be necessary
- Take one or two pictures and then move to a different angle or spot near the subject and take another picture or two
- Remember that the more pictures you take, the more likely you’ll have the meaningful shot you want
- Consider asking an adult who cares about you to discuss the project questions and your photographs in response to the questions
- Begin journaling about your photographs and explain with details and examples how the photograph illustrates your answer(s) to the project question(s)
- If you get stuck with writing, seek help from an adult or peer who you think is a good writer

“Through Students’ Eyes: SEEING City Youths’ Perspectives on School” PHOTO WALK Field Trip

Description

A photo walk is an excellent opportunity for students to walk around the neighborhood surrounding their school and, with cameras in hand, attempt to answer some of the project questions. It helps to make this a half-day school field trip and to have extra adults who are familiar with photography as chaperones. The following pages describe the format the original “Through Students’ Eyes” project has used; we have also included an example “release” or permission form.

Going up to a stranger and asking to take their picture can be intimidating and students will often choose inanimate objects to photograph. Challenge students to become comfortable explaining the project to strangers and they’ll likely be willing to allow photographs. The model release can also be daunting. If you plan on submitting photos of people to the TSE Website, you must provide a signed model release for each one submitted.

Guidelines for a successful photo walk field trip

- Establish clear and firm boundaries for chaperones of student groups, being aware of areas that may be problematic for students carrying cameras (see sample on following pages)
 - Providing a map and description of these boundaries is helpful
- Nearly all students have cellphones so make a list of student and chaperone cellphone numbers and use them to get updates on group progress or for emergencies
- Have students track each of their photos on the log sheet
 - This helps students remember what they were thinking when they snapped the image
- Remind students they can return to a spot later if they want to see how lighting or situations may have changed
- Include a set of behavioral guidelines so students are aware of their conduct while representing their school, district and community

A sampling of behavioral guidelines:

- Students may not use cell phones while on the photo-walk, except in an emergency. If there is an emergency, speak with an adult chaperone. Main Office phone number at the high school is 555-1212.
- You must remain with an adult chaperone at all times. No student is to leave their group.
- You may not make arrangements to meet with anyone while we are on the photo walk. If you encounter someone you know, politely explain that you are doing an assignment for school and need to focus on the assignment. If you need assistance, inform an adult chaperone.
- You are to follow the directives of the adult chaperone. Failure to follow directives will result in the entire group returning to the building and dropping the student at the main office with a referral.
- You must have your photo ID with you and visible at all times while on the photo walk.
- If you become separated from your group, go directly to the corner of West 31st and Main Street (see map on handout) and call your chaperone or teacher. An adult will meet you there within 15 minutes.

**“Through Students’ Eyes: SEEING City Youths’ Perspectives on School”
PHOTO WALK Field Trip**

PHOTO LOG of _____

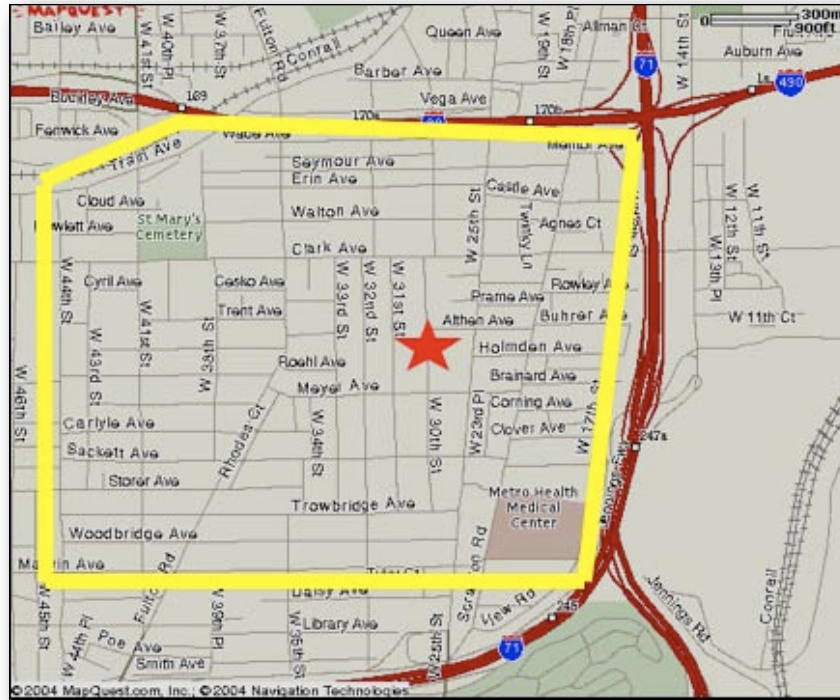
Picture #	Answers	Description of the scene
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		

Answer Key:
 1. What is the purpose of school?
 2. What supports your success in school?
 3. What things get in the way of your school success?

“Through Students’ Eyes: SEEING City Youths’ Perspectives on School”

Photo Walk of April 30th, 2004

Area of the field trip:



Stay within the yellow boundaries!

No further North than I-90

No further East than I-71

No further South than Marvin Avenue/Metro Health

No further West than West 41st Street

Procedural guidelines for students:

- Take a picture of a piece of paper with your name and your partner’s name written in BIG letters at the beginning of the photo walk, along with a picture of your faces (portraits)
- Write down on your photo log EACH subject you photograph. Use one line for every subject you shoot.
- You can always come back to a spot if you need to. Just ask your chaperone...

My Chaperone’s name is: _____

My Chaperone’s cell phone # is: _____

My Teacher’s name is: _____

My Teacher’s cell phone # is: _____

My school’s main office phone # is: _____

“Through Students’ Eyes: SEEING City Youths’ Perspectives on School”

Media Release Short Form

Full Legal Name of Student: _____

I hereby give permission for Through Students’ Eyes (TSE) to include certain personal information about me in connection with the Through Students’ Eyes project including publication of writing, likeness of image, appearance in video and sound of voice in presentations, promotional materials, news releases, newsletters, Web site content, film & video productions, newspaper articles, books, and in all media currently known or hereinafter devised in perpetuity.

I further give Through Students’ Eyes worldwide exclusive rights to publish and display my creative work such as photographs, illustrations and writing in presentations, promotional materials, news releases, newsletters, Web site content, film & video productions, newspaper articles, books, and in all media currently known or hereinafter devised in perpetuity for a period of two years from creation. After this two year period, Through Students’ Eyes will retain worldwide non-exclusive rights for the above stated publication and display purposes.

I understand that the above mentioned media will be accessible throughout the world and that the stories including my personal information may appear in written, video, electronic, and other forms, unless otherwise agreed upon.

I understand that the information and creative work provided by me may be used to promote Through Students’ Eyes and related programs and initiatives maintained by the creators of the Through Students’ Eyes project. I release Through Students’ Eyes and its agents, creators, sponsors and employees from any claims of infringement, invasion of privacy, defamation or misappropriation arising from the use of the information and creative works provided by me in the course of the project.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: ___/___/___

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: ___/___/___
(required if participant is under the age of 18)

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Participant Address: _____

Participant Home Phone #: _____

Participant Cell Phone #: _____

Participant Email Address: _____

School and District: _____

“Through Students’ Eyes: SEEING City Youths’ Perspectives on School”

Kristien Zenkov, Cleveland State University

Jim Harmon, Euclid High School

Project Description

What do city students think are the purposes of school? In addition to the traditional reasons they cite (e.g., because they’re required to attend), why do urban youth go to school? Even more importantly, what do they believe helps them to succeed in school and what gets in the way of this success?

Founded in 2004, the “Through Students’ Eyes” (TSE) project has worked with Cleveland, Ohio area high school and middle school youth to address these questions through both photographs and written reflections. TSE was begun by veteran local teachers, activists, photographers, and teacher educators in response to the consistently high dropout rates common in most urban centers in the United States.

Using “photovoice” and visual sociology methods, TSE researches and documents urban youths’ and community members’ perspectives on school—our nation’s most important and unifying institution. The project has collaborated with nearly 100 city students, displayed their work at numerous regional and national exhibitions, published articles and catalogues of youths’ images and reflections, and contributed to the dialogue about US schools and their abilities to serve their most diverse and disenfranchised constituents.

TSE is interested in addressing these questions using photographs and writing with populations of students from around the United States and beyond. Please contact us if you are interested in more details about our project or about conducting this project with your own students.

Publications/References

Marquez-Zenkov, K. & Harmon, J. (forthcoming). Seeing the purposes of, supports for, and impediments to urban students’ school success. *Theory Into Practice*.

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Harmon, J., Marquez-Zenkov, K., van Lier, P., & Marquez-Zenkov, M. (2007). “If they’ll listen to us about life, we’ll listen to them about school”: Seeing city students’ ideas about quality teachers. *Educational Action Research* 15(3), 403-415.

Marquez-Zenkov, K., & Harmon, J. (2007). Seeing English in the city: Using photography to understand students’ literacy relationships. *English Journal*, 96(6), 24-30.

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