Discovering P·L·A·C·E

Photo tips

Since some people are more drawn to visuals than words, you can more effectively communicate with others about your project by using photos that tell a story. Tips:

- **Hold the camera still.** A flash can capture action if you're close enough, but a flash can be distracting or inappropriate, so it's important to hold the camera still: With your elbows firmly at your sides, inhale, wait for your camera to focus clearly, then snap the photo while exhaling. Lean against a solid object, if possible. If your camera has a larger lens, support the lens with one hand and snap the picture with the other.
- **Scan for distractions and embarrassments.** Avoid including background details that may be distracting, misleading or be embarrassing to the subject.
- **Aim for candid photos.** Photojournalists know posed pictures don't tell a story the way candid photos do, so look for real facial expressions and action in your shots. Since news outlets prefer candid shots, they can help bring publicity to your project.
- **Shoot frequently and take lots of pictures!** In order to authentically capture a story, avoid prompting students to "smile for the camera" and take pictures so often students forget about the camera. Taking lots of pictures at a time makes it more likely you'll get a good, usable shot.
- **Move around and get into the mix.** Photographers can't be shy. Practice getting close to the action without being obtrusive. Also, move around to capture different angles and perspectives. With young children, get down to their level.
- **Divide your picture into thirds.** An outdoor photo is more inviting if it's not cut in half at the horizon. Position the camera so the land, water or sky occupies 1/3 or 2/3 of the photo. Use the rule of thirds for people and indoor photos too, to avoid a stilted look (see www.digital-photography-school.com/rule-of-thirds).
- **Line leads the eye.** Some photo settings include elements that can suggest a line or a path. Being aware of this can help you position the camera so the line leads the eye, drawing the viewer into the visual story.
- **Include story elements.** Close-up photos can be great, but be sure to get some shots including elements that tell a story. What's more effective, a picture of a bullet hole in glass, or the same picture with a little more background showing the glass is part of a school bus? Consider including an element that gives the viewer an idea of an object's size, or that complements the story the photo tells, such as lines on the hands of an aged community member sharing local history.
- **Remember photo authorization forms.** Before sending your photos to the media or otherwise publicly displaying them, be sure students' parents or guardians have signed a photo release form.

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