

# UNDERSTANDING OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

**Time:** Requires a minimum 2 sessions  
**Age:**All

## WHAT IS IT?

Students can develop a deeper understanding of “their community” and the idea of community through taking photos. With disposable or digital cameras, team members can document important spaces and places for them and in the community. Students can also write short descriptions of their photos and place them on larger group map or poster-board of their community.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Because the goal of PA is to make a positive public impact, it is a good idea to learn something about your community to do public work.

## WHEN IS THIS USEFUL?

This is a great exercise to do before students have chosen their interest groups. It is also a good idea if a team is having difficulty focusing on their project.

**MATERIALS:** flip chart / markers

**CORE CONCEPTS:** public, free spaces, diversity

**SKILLS:** creative thinking, writing, teamwork

## Activity 1: (15 minutes)

- A. Preview Project on Community (you may need permission slips to walk around neighborhood)
- B. Discussion
  - a. What does community mean to you?
  - b. In what ways do we define community differently?
  - c. What makes their community unique?

## Activity 2:

- A. Have students identify possible things to photograph:
  - a. I.e. places that define your community, i.e. fun places, places that young people feel safe, places that young people feel powerful, free spaces, assets (positive things) of your community, places where there are problems, places where people gather, places where people play, places where you can meet people, magical places, scary places, defining places.

- B. Optional activity: Creation of map of community
- i. students can create maps of their surrounding communities, labeling the places that they are going to photograph
  - ii. teachers can provide maps for students

\*For more on making maps see page 88 of

<http://www.publicachievement.org/pdf/techttools/pac-itt.pdf>

\*\*A good resources for street maps and directions are MapQuest

[www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com), Map Blast [www.mapblast.com](http://www.mapblast.com), Yahoo Maps

<http://maps.yahoo.com>, Maps on Us [www.mapsonus.com](http://www.mapsonus.com)

### Activity 3:

- A. Lesson on how to use cameras / Practice using cameras.

### Activity 4:

- A. This may require volunteers
- B. Make “shot list” with map, though let students know that they may find other places to photograph as they walk.
- C. Discuss rules for walking the neighborhood and taking photos
- D. Have students work in small groups to take photographs. This can either be done as a class or in small groups sequentially.
- E. **Reflection:**
  - i. What was it like to walk around your neighborhood with cameras?
  - ii. Did people take that they did not plan on taking? Why these? What do they capture?
  - iii. How did people see their community differently when they were taking photos?

### Activity 5:

- A. Students sort photos, labeling each one and deciding which 1-3 are best.
- B. Each student or group of students can then place photos on map, or on poster-board defining community.
- C. For each photo they select, students will then need to write a paragraph describing the photo, why they took it, and what it represents in their community.
- D. Photos can then be placed on large map of community or poster board.
- E. **Reflection:**
  - i. What was it like to do a project that required many steps
  - ii. Do you think about the finished product? Is this what you imagined it would be?
  - iii. How do you think about your community differently as a result of this project



**Optional Activity:**

- A. Students can enlarge photos and hold an art exhibit (in school or community).
- B. In addition to putting photos and descriptions on walls, make sure to have an “art opening” inviting parents and community members (possibly those who students interacted with on their project). Students could then answer questions about their photos.