



IMPACT REPORT

Mission

"I feel it is the heart, not the eye, that should determine the content of the photograph. What the eye sees is its own. What the heart can perceive is a very different matter." — Gordon Parks

Last year, a group of students at HOPE Alternative Learning Program (HOPE ALP) in Edgecombe County, NC, participated in "Glimpses of Hope," a PhotoVoice program proposed by HOPE teacher Crystal Lancaster as part of her team's work with ROI. The project allowed students to learn photography skills for a deeper purpose. Through a series of photography assignments, the students learned to use photography as a means of self-expression, helping to build an appreciation of their surroundings and make sense of the difficult circumstances they face in everyday life.

The mission of PhotoVoice was to help students use visual storytelling as a strategy to heal from trauma and find beauty in the ordinary. This impact report showcases the participants' experiences and the results of the program.

Execution

ROI partnered with HOPE ALP to provide funding for PhotoVoice, which was facilitated by local artist and visual journalist Jenny Jacklin and Crystal Lancaster. Students were given cameras which they used to complete photo assignments. They then engaged in a weekly dialogue about their pieces and the feelings they evoked. After 10 weeks, they showcased their work at a gallery show entitled Glimpses of Hope, where community members could engage with the students and their photographs.

"I see this different side in [Zamarion]...he doesn't mind going to school and telling us what he did. I like that."

Lizzie Stanton, reflecting on her grandson Zamarion Stanton's reaction to PhotoVoice.

"I had a student say 'I wasn't going to come to school today, but then I remembered we had PhotoVoice.'... If you open those doors for them, the kids will walk through them and shine."

Crystal Lancaster, reflecting on student reactions to PhotoVoice.

Glimpses of Hope PhotoVoice Project

The PhotoVoice participants were thrilled to showcase their work to community members at two gallery events. Watch the video to hear student, faculty, and community reactions to the project.





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Healing Through Storytelling

Alternative school students face challenges in their transition to a new school. “When they come here, they lose a lot,” says Crystal. “They will be separated from old friends, sports, and hobbies they had at their last school. The HOPE program is amazing, but because we’re not connected to other schools, it can kind of feel like you’re on an island by yourself.” On top of that, alternative school students may encounter difficult situations at home or stigma within their community.

A lifelong lover of photography, Crystal saw PhotoVoice as an opportunity to give HOPE students a chance to reclaim their narrative. “Sometimes people just need to be given a chance to shine. It’s about seeing potential in someone and letting them know. It breathes life into their spirit. I wanted PhotoVoice to provide healing to students through a new medium most of them haven’t tried before.”

Though the five student participants were apprehensive to start the program, Jenny says it didn’t take long for them to dive in. “Once they started looking at the world around them with their cameras, something clicked. They now had a tool and skills to share their unique point of view, and they built community with each other while sharing their photographs over the ten weeks.”

Each week, the students were given a prompt to inspire their next photo assignment. They practiced depicting specific visual techniques while capturing their challenges and joys, favorite places, peers, and more. They also had an opportunity to visit an art museum and see the work of a variety of artists and creative mediums. These experiences enabled the students to build community with each other and confidence in telling their stories through photography. Jenny witnessed their leadership and social skills blossom. “I was having a hard week, and the students surprised me by decorating an encouraging sign,” she shared. “They recognized that I was going through something, and they worked together to show their support. As we shared our own experiences through our photographs, it not only instilled confidence in the students, but created space and community for them to help others.”

The culminating gallery show, Glimpses of Hope, was a huge success for the students and well-received by the community. “Students showed up in formal attire. Community members asked to buy the artwork. It was inspiring to watch the students receive recognition for their incredible work,” said Crystal.

Future Plans

After the success of the first iteration of PhotoVoice, HOPE ALP has restarted the program with a new group of students and plans to continue growing its impact. Crystal added, “We’d love to have past participants return as mentors, and to encourage continuity of the program. As we continue developing the curriculum with Jenny, we strive to show students the power of photography not just as a means for expression, but as a helpful tool for healing and building resilience.”

“Through the program, the students challenged stereotypes and authored their own narratives. They have so much to say, express, and give. They’re caring and creative.”

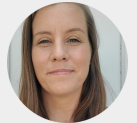
Jenny Jacklin, PhotoVoice facilitator

Thank you to our partners

Your help allows us to execute projects like PhotoVoice to better serve youth in rural eastern NC.



Jenny Jacklin
PhotoVoice Program
Facilitator



Crystal Lancaster
HOPE ALP English
and History Teacher



Meagan Sykes
ECPS Exceptional
Children’s Director



Quarry Williams
HOPE ALP Principal



Dr. Robert Batts
ECPS Director of
Secondary Education



Dr. Chanda Battle
Waters
ECPS Director of
Student Support
Services



Dr. Valerie Bridges
ECPS Superintendent



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Collection of Photographs



Gambit Robinson



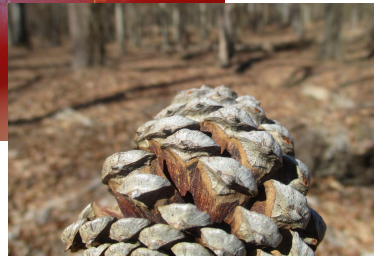
Matthew O'Neal



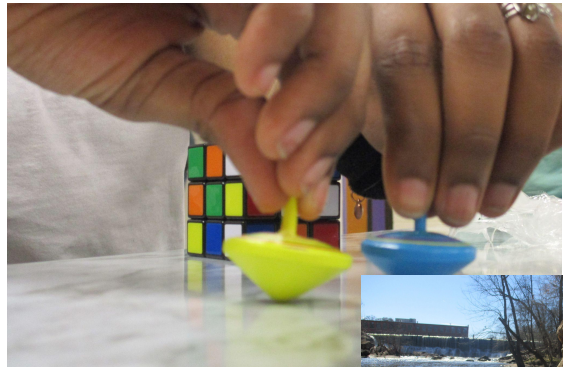
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