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Photovoice Gives Students a Voice

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ABSTRACT

Students often struggle with ways to turn their experiences into meaningful stories. Photovoice is a way to use photography for positive social change and to help people tell their stories. I used Photovoice to help students process the uncertainty of moving back home when the university switched to remote in Spring 2020. Since I teach public speaking, I used those stories to teach public speaking skills as well.

For example, one prompt I used was “an unexpected use of something.” I showed them a small hand weight that I used as a doorstop. I took creative pictures of the weight and then used it to tell a story in different ways. Each class student brought their photo and their story. They had to use the photo to tell different types of stories. Sometimes telling the story from a different perspective and sometimes telling it in only 5 words. The experience created an important bond between students as they shared very ordinary items from their life. It also presented a new springboard for student story telling.

OBJECTIVES

1. Empower students to use photovoice techniques to tell their stories.
2. Provide students a way to start conversations about their feelings of the pandemic.
3. Teach students advanced story telling techniques.
4. Create a safe space where students can connect.
5. Embolden students to overcome speech anxiety.



Photovoice:
Ethical photography
for social change

Photovoice training funded by
a University of Arkansas
Provost Instructional Grant

Finding meaning in the pivot to remote learning.

RESULTS

Prompt: What's the Lesson?



Life is surely different,
but it is still
abundantly good.

The crisp autumn sun on my shoulders, the quiet, buzzing bustle of the market, and a tender smile on an elderly woman's face. The farmer's market is my absolute favorite thing about Fayetteville. Every Saturday morning last Fall, I would get up early, walk downtown, and bask in the sunshine that is this little town. Strangers become friends with something as simple as a smile, a sunflower becomes a treasure, and the world slows down for just a few hours.

It's extremely difficult for me to slow down. I have a never-ending timer running in my mind telling myself to get up, get out, and go do ALL the things before they disappear. Well, it happened. The checklist in my brain of all the things to do and places to see- halted in its tracks- erased. My Spring bucket list? Crumpled and thrown away- impossible to complete. It's also extremely difficult to let myself be sad. But I finally allowed it. I allowed myself to feel overwhelmed and cheated and completely hopeless. It was very freeing. But once I was done, I stood back up, washed away my tears, and remembered my days at the farmer's market- remembered how good it felt to simply slow down for a few hours. While this is not where I imagined I would be or what I would be doing on April 26th, it is wonderful, nonetheless. The lesson learned is that slowing down does not mean stopping. I've found new small joys in the wildflowers outside my house, homemade banana bread, watching my favorite show together with my family, coffee in the morning and tea in the evening, and the setting sun. Life is surely different, but it is still abundantly good. Hannah Allred.

PHOTOVOICE PROMPTS

1. What brings you peace?
2. Something that is important.
3. Sense of place.
4. How have you changed?
5. What's your message?
6. What's the lesson?

*Getting to know my
classmates a little more
intimately made it easier to
talk in front of them*

*I loved how your lessons forced
us to get
to know one another.
It made us all friends.*

*I saw so much self-growth in
this class!*

*I am incredibly thankful for
your reassurance and care
during this stressful time.*

*I admire your eclectic nature, your
enthusiastic teaching style, and the
way that you so easily educate us
not only on the course content, but
on how to be better people*

I'm learning how to
Spend time with myself.

Prompt: Sense of Place

Two Rivers is a park in Little Rock with biking and walking trails along the Arkansas River. I've grown up going to this park; I learned how to ride my bike there and even broke my arm doing it. In high school, my friend Hope and I would take my dog for walks there after class. This picture was taken of my friends and I right after UARK transitioned to online classes. I haven't been able to see them since, because we're trying to be safe and practice social distancing. It wasn't until now that I realized the simple things, I took for granted, like petting cute dogs I pass at Two Rivers or even getting to do homework with friends. I do still have Two Rivers, though, and the ability to get out in nature. I can still take my dog for walks even if my best friends can't join. I'm taking this opportunity to better myself by studying more, picking up old hobbies like drawing and painting, and working out. I'm learning how to spend time with myself, and I know I'll appreciate my friends so much more when I get to spend time with them again.
NB

CONCLUSIONS

1. Students reported decreases speech anxiety.
2. Students had a unique opportunity to document and share their experience during the pandemic.
3. Students told highly developed stories.
4. Students integrated the lessons from the Photovoice prompts into their speeches.
5. Students connected with others creating a safe space to learn and grow.