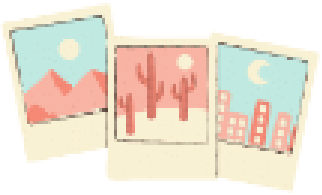
PHOTO STORY



MAIN FEATURES

Strengthened skills	CONSTRUCT, AIMS, SUPPORT, FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS
Suitable for	Teachers, students
Difficulty level	Low
Setting	Group
Minimum number of participants	5
Average duration	60 minutes
Special equipment/materials	Yes
Online version	Yes

1. DESCRIPTION

This practice uses photography to tell the concerns and stories of a group or community. The activity requires you to take photos of your choice and in the open air, and then show them to the group. Photo stories support knowledge, build trust and relieve tension, encourage participation, and help create a sense of connection and a shared understanding.

2. PURPOSE/BENEFITS

Photo history is a flexible activity to be carried out in a wide range of situations and circumstances. The practice can be used as an "icebreaker" or to get to know one's peers better. If this is the purpose of the exercise, the facilitator (e.g., a teacher) may ask participants (e.g., their students) to take a picture of something they feel represents them or is important to them. Sharing the story with others generates understanding and empathy and allows you to detect common interests among group members.

In a school setting, exercise can be used to make students active agents in finding solutions to concerns or problems they feel strongly. Two possible modes:

1. Identify a problem, concern, or problem that is common throughout the group of students; ask your students to take a picture of the problem and explain why this is a concern and how the photo represents that concern;
2. Stimulate a process that aims to work towards a solution to a concern, a general or specific problem present among the group of students, in the school or in the community to which the school belongs. The teacher may ask to take a photo of something that students believe represents the concern or problem presented by the teacher.

This use not only generates the same benefits as when used as an icebreaker but helps to create a sense of competence, belonging to a group with similar concerns and motivates students to become active agents of change and help find and implement a solution.

Getting students out and taking a photo of their choice can be a recreational exercise because it takes their minds off the subject for a moment and allows them to "breathe fresh air."

3. RELATED SKILLS CLUSTERS

The exercise contributes to a better understanding of the other members of the group and increases empathy between them; it also arouses the curiosity of the students for their peers (SUPPORT).
Identifying common themes and motifs through the photos and stories behind them generates a sense of competence and belonging, supports relationship building and better mutual understanding and influence (BUILD).

When used to work on a problem or concern, the exercise is the goal- and future-oriented and elicits new ideas for potential solutions (SETTING GOALS and FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS).

4. HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE

Step 1 / Preparation:

This step is necessary to explain how to prepare and present the exercise to the participant.

The facilitator (e.g., teacher) explains to participants (e.g., their students) the purpose of the exercise, i.e. to document their group, school or community with a photo, depending on whether the focus is on the group of participants, the school, broader wider community in which the collocated and/or the community to which the participants belong.

Participants should photograph something that is important to them or that is a concern for them. The image can be the concern itself or sympathy representing their concern. In a school setting, this can be done within a teaching session to be given as "homework" to students.

Participants should then upload their images, e.g. to a shared folder (the facilitator lets them do it themselves or requests the photos to be seen and then uploaded), so that the facilitator can take a look and identify common patterns and patterns among these images.

Step 2 Explanation of the stories:

The facilitator shares the folder with the participants or prints the photos to be displayed on a wall; It then asks participants to tell the story that accompanies their photo, making sure they explain why they selected this story an it is important or concerning for them; it also asks why this particular image they believe represents this particular problem or concern. It is recommended to reserve a maximum of three minutes per story.

If the group is large, it is possible to use a sample that can be selected by the facilitators (based on the basis of common experience and the patterns detected) or by the participants through a vote (making sure in this case that the authors of the photos are not known).

Step 3 ***/ Group discussion:***

The facilitator and participants reflect on the stories together. Participants are asked to tell photo stories to spark more stories and stimulate sharing. This approach to creating group stories should last between 1 and 2 hours maximum depending on the participants.

5. FINAL REFLECTION

At the end of the session, the facilitator reserves about an hour to discuss with the participant's thoughts and ideas that have evolved based on the photographic stories and the stories aroused in the final passage of the activity.

Depending on your assignment (e.g., a photo story about the group, school, or community), it might be interesting to expand sharing photos and associated stories with others outside of the workgroup to get

feedback from a larger group. This generates conversations that can help you see the problem or concern from another point of view and help find a solution.

6. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

- A digital camera or smartphone that can take pictures;
- Shared folder or other storage options;
- Printer (if you decide to print).

7. TIPS

In a school setting, doing the activity during a teaching session can help students concentrate on a completely different activity and thus support them in processing all the information obtained so far. In this case, you can reserve five minutes to take the picture. Stories and sharing can be done at another time in case the teaching session has little time available after the photos have been taken; you can use short work sessions during subsequent sessions to ask for a couple of photo stories to explain.

If students do not have a digital device (e.g. camera), it may be appropriate to check whether the school has such tools available.

8. ONLINE VERSION

The activity also works well online, using the same steps mentioned above. It will be necessary to use video conferencing tools for the session in which participants explain their stories and for group discussion.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY - SITOGRAPHY

- Reimagining Migration. *Classroom Resource: Empathy Through Photography* (link).
- Empathy and Photography (link).
- Allen, J. K. (2021). (Re) Imagining Multilingual Learners: Using Photo Stories to Honor Students' Strengths, Interests, and Experiences (link). *GATESOL Journal*, *31*(1), 47–53.